



# Information Sharing in a Nordic Chinese Christian Church

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# Abstract

China is a country with great diversity and a long history of migration so cultural differences and cultural mixture can be found in the Chinese communities outside of China.

This paper looks into how the diversity among Chinese immigrants in Sweden that would lead to the differences and challenges in sharing information with each other. The study is conducted in Nordic Chinese Christian church. In-depth interviews and participant observations are taken as the method. Possible influencing factors including cultural background, language, educational level, age are the focuses of this study. The impacts of religion and mixed factors issues are discussed as well.

From the findings, it is noticed that generally there is a joint influence of cultural background, language, fellowship, and education on the information sharing, but it is also found that the main factors influencing the three types of information sharing vary from each other.

The study points to the need for studying the changes between new Chinese immigrants and older Chinese immigrants. Attention to the second generation of immigrants in Sweden, and diversity challenges to church or in the field of religion is needed as well.

**Keywords:** information sharing, diversity, Chinese immigrants, church

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# Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter first starts with an introduction of this study, then talks about the purpose. After that, the research question of this study is introduced, and definitions of some key concepts are explained to avoid confusion.

## 1.1 Problem Statement

China is a country with great diversity, the impact of different subcultures in China can be a potentially crucial driver of individual behavior and performance (Gong, Chow & Ahlstrom, 2011). Additionally, since China has a long history of migration (Shen, 2010), some Chinese migrants are immensely situated in the places of settlement; thus, Chinese ethnic group is heterogeneous with high culture mix. From the authors' experience in the Nordic Chinese Christian Church in Sweden, they have found lots of differences among these Chinese members, who respectively come from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Mainland China, Southeast Asia, and some of them were born and raised in Sweden. Cultural background, language, age, education level, fellowship group of these members are distinct.

In society, one of the important institutions is the church. In some countries, such as America, churches are among the few institutions that regularly bring immigrants, social isolates or minorities into contact with the "mainstream" (Angrosino, 2001). According to Angrosino, it has a tendency to "bring individuals into meaningful relationships with others in a group." (2001, p. 48) Nevertheless, whether these people can maintain positive relationships with each other and later better integrate into society may depend on their communication. The challenge is that the dissimilarity in a church with a heterogeneous group can bring barriers (e.g., differences in languages) that disrupt their communication in the whole group.

Sharing information is a broad general purpose of communication. Through information sharing, individuals can create and strengthen social bonds, share or gain resources (personal needs or group needs) and share thoughts and knowledge. Within the church, social ties are essential (Krause & Wulff, 2005). According to Simmel, an earlier sociologist, "The faith that has come to be regarded as the essential, the substance, of religion is first a relation between human beings." (1905, p.366) To Christians, the faith places a significant emphasis on loving one's fellow man (Krause & Wulff, 2005). Sharing personal and practical information may help them create social bonds and gain supports from each other. In addition to maintaining quality relationships with each other in the church, believers assembling to study and spread God's messages (the Bible) is one of the primary activities and tasks of the church. During the processes, religious knowledge together with personal experience as a

testimony may be shared.

In a migrant's community of people who share common ethnic identity, mission, religion, getting together with the love of God yet with big diversity, it will be of interest to investigate how those similarities and differences can affect their information sharing with each other.

## **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to get a better understanding of the diversity and the communication problems of the Chinese ethnic groups in Sweden. Although the case of the Nordic Chinese Christian Church in Gothenburg is a bit unique from other Chinese communities, it involves many Chinese people with different backgrounds, the difficulties in communication within the church can be a miniature of the problems in communication within the whole Chinese society in Sweden or in the world.

## **1.3 Research Question**

The research question of this study is described as follows:

How can cultural background, language, educational level, age, fellowship groups affect the information sharing of the members in the church?

The shared information is specified into three categories: personal information, practical information, religious information (see below).

## **1.4 Definition of Central Concepts**

### **1.4.1 Information**

Information is a multifaceted concept with multi-layered meanings. From the hierarchical view of data, information, and knowledge, information is defined as “a flow of messages or meanings which might add to, restructure or change knowledge.” (Machlup, 1983, cited in Nonaka, 1994, p15). It is “the commodity capable of yielding knowledge” (Dretske, 1981, p44).

In our case, information is a flow of messages that can add to, restructure, or change to these Chinese church-goers' understandings, opinions or knowledge about their fellows in the church, the surroundings, and the faiths. It includes those which direct to an action as well. More specifically, “information” in this case mainly refers to the facts, opinions, and individual experience.

- 1) Personal information: In this study, it primarily refers to one's own

experience. It can be some basic information about a person that can help to identify this individual. In this church, the personal information can be member's name, age, family, occupation, personal lives, etc. It can sometimes also be sensitive information that is not supposed to share in the public, like the suffering the members have been through and needed to be shared for praying.

- 2) Practical information: Practical information can be loosely regarded as know-how information. It is a kind of information help you know how to do something—say, ride a bicycle. In this study, it involves two aspects. One can be tips that can be applied or are useful for daily life, such as the way to cook, news on summer sales, house rent, etc. The other can be related to the discussion of church affairs. For example, how to arrange a church activity together.
- 3) Religious information: It refers to knowledge related to Christianity, such as religious history, religious explanations, or discipline. To be specific, it can be shared in the forms of the sermon, preaching, testimony, and discussions in the bible study.

#### **1.4.2 Chinese**

In the Chinese term “Huaren”, which can be translated as “Chinese”, or equivalently as the English term “ethnic Chinese”, it is commonly used to refer to the Chinese outside China (Suryadinata & Beng, 1997). It includes “Huaqiao”- Chinese citizens who own a permanent residence in a foreign country, and “Huayi”- Chinese with foreign nationals and their foreign nationals descents, or Chinese citizens’ foreign nationals descents (Overseas Chinese Affairs Office Of The State Council, 2015).

Chinese in Mainland China call themselves “Zhongguo Ren (local Chinese)” (Suryadinata & Beng, 1997). Chinese in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, officially namely Gang-Ao-Tai Tongbao”(compatriots from Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan), they usually call themselves Chinese, Hong Kongers, Macanese or Taiwanese if they want to emphasize their local identities (Suryadinata & Beng, 1997).

In the Chinese Church in Sweden, the attendants consist of Chinese international students from Greater China (Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan), as well as ethnic Chinese from Southeast Asia and other parts of the world. Chinese-birth people with Sweden citizenships and second generation of Chinese immigrants are included too. In this case, the term “Huaren” (Chinese) needed to be extended, referring to Chinese in general. It can include Chinese citizens (including citizens from Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan) in Sweden, and people originating from Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, or having ancestors from there.



## **Chapter Two: Background**

Chapter two goes into the background of the Nordic Chinese Church where the study is conducted. The authors also talk about the phenomenon of members having mixed cultural background. Following is an introduction to the cultural diversity in church and the history of Chinese immigrants. Previous studies in the field of diversity, as well as personal knowledge sharing barriers, are mentioned too.

### **2.1 The Nordic Chinese Christian Church**

The Nordic Chinese Church was originally started by the missionaries from London, the UK in 1979. They started with having gatherings or fellowships with the early Chinese Christians and Chinese immigrants who were interested in Christianity. In the very beginning, the majority and most active ones were people from Hong Kong, who worked in the catering business and could only speak little Swedish or English. A few of them were from Mainland China, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia, but the number was quite small. In the 1980s, numerous refugees from Vietnam fled to Sweden. Among them were ethnic Chinese and some of them joined the church as well. Since the 1990s, immigrants from Mainland China have increased dramatically. First came the P.hD. students and scholars, who were about 30 or 40; and later younger Chinese students came to Sweden to study. A shift of use of language occurred during the 1990s when an increasing number of Mandarin-speakers from Mainland China arrived. Due to the born of the second generation of Chinese immigrants in Sweden, Swedish and English were gradually widely used in the children and teenagers groups. However, the numbers of people in the church have maintained around 30ish in the past decades, except some time in the 1990s.

The church can be seen as an organization where people have the same goal, which is to spread the Christian faith to all the Chinese over Gothenburg so that the gospel can be spread. In terms of the structure of the church, there is a steering committee within the church, which deals with all kinds of affairs in the church. This year, there are chairman, secretary, treasurer, general affairs etc. Those key members organize all those activities - Sunday services, camping, and they sometimes make decisions on church affairs, and deliver the messages to all the members of the church; and present reports, etc. Under the committee, several fellowship groups are for various members. Such as the youth and junior group for teenagers who are born and raised here, which is in Swedish; and the group mainly for Mandarin speakers. The fellowship groups were initially formed based on the areas members living in Gothenburg. Participants living in the same areas used to go to the same fellowship group. According to the interviewees, in the past, Chinese immigrants primarily concentrated in Hisingen, Frölunda, Angered; thus, they set up different fellowship groups in these three

locations. Apart from the similarity in living areas, it was likely that the majority of group members in Hisingen were middle-aged females speaking Cantonese more or less, and most of participants from Frölunda came from Southeast Asia, while members who went to the group in Angered usually spoke Mandarin. It was also the cases that people would join the group with similar cultural backgrounds or language, even though they did not stay in that area. Gradually, as people moved and new members joined, the constitution of members in the same fellowship group changed. New fellowship groups for international students were established as well. Generally speaking; currently, individuals in the same fellowship group may have similarities in the language, background, age, etc.; but it varies from group to group. Many of the members seem to stick to their fellowship groups, but some key members would go to several different groups.

Although members appear to interact a lot with the members of the same fellowship, there are still many occasions where they can communicate with members from other fellowships. For example, they can mingle with each other during the coffee break after Sunday service, and they can also get to know others better when they have summer camp, Easter camp, etc.

## **2.2 Mixed Cultural Background Among Members in the Church**

It is noticed that many members of this church have been experiencing the mixed cultural environment, as they came from many places out of China and quite a few of them have lived in Sweden for decades. Part of them have encountered the Swedish culture when they grew up. Some members even have been brought up in several cultures as well, since they might live in several different countries because of the move of their family. Under this circumstances, it would be too narrow to just discuss Chinese or Swedish culture.

## **2.3 Cultural Diversity in Church**

There are not so many discussions of cultural diversity in church or among religious professionals. However, the issue is probably even more vexing in religion than another field; because religion is concerned with the matters that in most case can reflect a higher, more universal truth than anything deriving from mere human society and its cultures (Angrosino, 2001). Beliefs and practices are taught and shared in groups of real people, which are profoundly linked to their own cultures. The preaching must be transmitted through the ways in which people can know and understand; thus, it cannot avoid recognizing human culture (Angrosino, 2001). The need for understanding cultural diversity is not limited to overseas missions. In every church community within one country, it is increasingly becoming culturally diverse due to the global migrations. The cultural diversity can actually reflect on individual

behaviors in a church. In a case study in communication across ethnic borders, for example, a middle-class congregation tried to welcome some new immigrants but found that those newcomers misunderstand them because of the cultural differences (Angrosino, 2001). Language, age, disability, racial attitudes can all be challenges for a church and religious activities (Angrosino, 2001). In a word, diversity, especially cultural diversity is worth of studying.

## **2.4 Chinese Immigrants**

### **2.4.1 Chinese Immigrants from Southeast Asia**

In the post-war period, one of the most significant migrations of Chinese were ethnic Chinese from Southeast Asia such as Malaysia and Indonesia (Shen, 2010). Southeast Asia is currently the biggest region home to “Huaren”(overseas Chinese or ethnic Chinese), with more than 80 per cent of the Chinese outside China (Suryadinata, 1997). It is true that many immigrants who left China at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often considered themselves as sojourners, and would eventually return to their homeland, China. Nevertheless, the situation began to change after the Southeast Asian countries gained independence and Mainland China turned communist. The majority Chinese immigrants and their immediate descendants later decided to remain in Southeast Asia and adopt local citizenship (Suryadinata & Beng, 1997). In the recent past twenty years, increasing evidence suggest that the Chinese are integrating into the local Southeast Asian societies and pride of their local status. In some countries, the Chinese have even progressed same ways towards assimilation (Hing & Adam, 1997).

### **2.4.2 Chinese Immigrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan**

Chinese from Hong Kong and Taiwan were the majority of Chinese migrants overseas after the World War Two. One of the most striking Chinese emigration trends were the one from Hong Kong's New Territories to Western Europe (Pieke,2002). Later, they arrived in Belgium, Germany, and Scandinavia mainly working in the catering trade (Pieke, 2002). Even after 1978, Hongkongese and Cantonese continue to dominate the Chinese communities in Western Europe (Pieke, 2002).

Unlike Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan are capitalist because of the colonial history (Hong Kong) and the Kuomintang government (Taiwan). Before 1949, Chinese in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan all had similar Chinese identities. But a shift occurred after 1949, when China turned communist, and the Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist Party) fled to Taiwan and continued the implementation of capitalism. Addition to the differences between communism and capitalism, as well as the economic factors, the rise of local awareness is also affected by the changing policies of Mainland China and Taiwan, Hong Kong (Zheng & Wong, 2008).

Furthermore, languages are used differently to some extent in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Cantonese is estimated as the mother tongue in Hong Kong, spoken by more than 88 percent of the population (Gov HK, 2016; Census and Statistics Department, 2016, p. 88). English is one of the official language in Hong Kong, widely used in government and by the legal, professional and business sectors (Gov HK, 2016). Mandarin is the official language in both Taiwan and Mainland China (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan); Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language, 2001). However, the pronunciation, intonation, and vocabulary are different in some ways (Wang, 2008).

#### **2.4.3 Chinese Immigrants from Mainland China**

After World War II and the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC), international migration from Mainland China was hard to see due to the isolation policy from the West. From the end of World War II till the early 1990s, there were only around two million Chinese migrants abroad were coming from Mainland China, accounting only 6 per cent of migrants all over the world (Shen, 2010).

After the deregulation of migration policy and the adopted “Open-Door Policy” in the late 1970s, the migration waves from Mainland China gradually became more intense, through both legal and illegal channels (Shen, 2010). The first flow was immigrants from areas where before 1949 the majority of overseas Chinese came from, such as Guangdong province, Fujian province and Zhejiang province (Pieke, 2002; Shen, 2010). Another flow of new Chinese migrants were mainly students and visiting scholars receiving the scholarships from Chinese or foreign institutions (Pieke & Speelman, 2013). Further, China's continuous economic growth have also stimulated the fever of studying abroad after 2000. Soon, China becomes the largest source country of international students in the world (Shen, 2010).

#### **2.4.4 Chinese Immigrants in Sweden**

After the Second World War, Britain, the majority of Chinese concentrated in France and the Netherlands, from where the Chinese spread across the central and northern Europe (Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria and the Nordic countries from the 1970s). (Laczko, 2003)

In 2014, China (excluding Hong Kong and Taiwan) was among the top-ten countries of origin for immigrants in Sweden, accounting about 3 per cent of total inflows of foreigners (OECD, 2016 a). Swedish authorities estimated the amount of Chinese-born (excluding Hong Kong and Taiwan) population as 28699 people in 2014 (SCB, 2016). Regarding the Chinese international students in Sweden, the number in the same year was up to 2373 people, including 1024 with doctor's or

equivalent levels and 1001 with masters or equivalent degrees (OECD, 2016 b). As Laczko (2003) addressed, one of the most noticeable features of recent trends in Chinese migration (excluding Hong Kong and Taiwan) to Europe has been “the substantial growth in the number of students and skilled migrants who have been attracted to northern Europe.” (p. 9)

However, there are quite a few from Hong Kong, Taiwan and other parts of the world who came to Sweden in around 1970s. For example, Cantonese from and the Pearl River Delta and Hong Kong worked in the Chinese catering trade. Ethnic Chinese immigrants from former European colonies in Southeast Asia and other regions. After the fall of the US-backed regimes in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia in 1975, thousands of Vietnamese, Cambodians fled to Sweden, and a great number of them were Chinese (Pieke & Speelman, 2013). Although comprehensive statistics about the number of Chinese in Sweden are missed, the characteristics of Chinese in Sweden can be similar as those in Western Europe: greater diversity is found in source areas, socio-economic background, types of employment and entrepreneurship (Pieke, 2002).

## **Chapter Three: Previous Research**

This chapter looks into previous studies in the field of diversity research and knowledge/ information sharing barriers. Concerning studies about diversity, it first talks about group diversity research in general, and later it would specify the relevant studies focusing on situations in Sweden and in China. By analyzing several previous diversity studies, it is found that there is few empirical studies considering the combination of various dimensions of diversity, and the interaction between social categorization and information/decision-making processes in a heterogeneous group beyond workplace.

### **3.1 Diversity in an Organization**

Diversity has been widely studied in a workplace setting, as most organizations have to face the challenge of diversity in the future (Miller, 2014). The primary focus about diversity in a workplace setting is related to gender, ethnic and racial minorities (Miller, 2014). However, work group diversity, which can refer to “the degree to which there are differences between group members” (Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007, p515), can have many dimensions. It can include readily observable attributes, such as racial and ethnic diversity, age, gender; and those that are less visible, such as cultural diversity, education level, language, career, religions and beliefs, etc (Shore, et al, 2009; Harrison, Price & Bell, 1998; Gordon, Graham, Robinson & Taulbut, 2010). Some researchers also suggest it is necessary to consider differences in personality, attitudes, and values, for instance (Bowers et al. 2000, Harrison et al. 1998, Jehn et al. 1999, cited in Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007).

According to Williams and O'Reilly, (1998; cited in Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007), in the past 40 years, diversity studies has largely been guided by two research traditions: the social categorization perspective and the information/decision-making perspective. Social categorization perspective suggests that differences between people may elicit social categorization processes (e.g., stereotyping others, subgroup formation, intergroup biases) that can bring a negative consequence to group functioning, as group members are more satisfied with and attracted to someone similar. In contrast to social categorization perspective, information/ decision-making perspective indicated that work group diversity may be associated with differences in information, knowledge, and perspectives. Because diverse groups are likely to have a broader range of task-relevant knowledge, skills, abilities, opinions, etc.; work group diversity in this sense could be helpful for more creative and innovative group performance (Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007).

Evidence respectively supporting both for the positive effects as well as for the

negative effects of diversity is rich (Miller, 2014), but they are highly inconsistent (Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). Some scholars claimed that diversity may be beneficial for group performance but at the same time can do harm to interpersonal relations. However, Knippenberg and Schippers (2007) argue that it is hard to see how the outcome described by the social categorization and the information/decision-making perspective could occur simultaneously.

Traditionally, diversity studies have focused on the effects of different dimensions of diversity in isolation, such as age, gender, attitudes. Some scholars, however, called for attentions on the combination of various types of diversity. For example, Lau and Murnighan used the term “group faultlines” to refer to “combinations of diversity that yield a clear basis for differentiation between subgroups” (1998; cited in Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007, p.523). It divides a group's members by one or more attributes. In particular, faultline gets stronger when more attributes align themselves together (Lau & Murnighan, 1998). For instance, when all of the women are from Sweden and all of the men are from China, the sex and culture attribute align and form a single, stronger faultline. The diversity and faultline strength both contribute to group dynamics and development processes (Lau & Murnighan, 1998). Therefore, it is suggested that it might be better to regard work group diversity as an interaction of differences on different dimensions (Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007).

The social categorization perspective and the information/decision-making perspective have often developed separately. In a diversity research review, Knippenberg and Schippers (2007) urged researchers to pay more theoretical and empirical attention to the social categorization and information/decision-making processes. because the intergroup bias may cause individuals less open to communicate with dissimilar others, and may therefore disrupt group information processing (van Knippenberg, 1999, 2004; cited in Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007).

### **3.2 Communication in a Heterogeneous Group in Sweden and China**

Swedish multicultural society is defined as “a society of cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity” by the Swedish Immigration Committee (Omanović, 2009). Three official governmental documents (Komitee'direktiv, 1994; SOU, 1996; and Regeringens proposition, 1997) released in 1990 made a change in Swedish immigration policies and had significant influences on Swedish organizations (Omanović, 2009). Currently, diversity has been affirmed as a part of everyday Swedish life (Omanović, 2009).

From a larger social scale, a dialectical analysis of diversity production in the U.S. and Sweden showed the main ideas, interests, and actions about diversity and diversity management in Sweden (Omanović, 2009). From a smaller organizational

scale. A Cross-cultural study explored the relation between classroom ethno-racial diversity, ethnic tolerance, and participation in Sweden, England and Germany using data from the IEA Civic Education Study among 14-year-olds. It was found that classroom diversity showed a positive relation with both ethnic tolerance and participation only in Sweden. It did not affect the tolerance and participation in England, and no positive influence was found on the dimension of participation in Germany either (Janmaat, 2012).

China is a diverse country with numerous subcultures and dialects (Gong, Chow & Ahlstrom, 2011). Regional variation within China can be considerable and may lead to significant differences in attitudes and behavior. Gong, Chow and Ahlstrom (2011) assumed that Chinese people's frequency of speaking in their local dialect is related to their identification process within an organization or community, which could, in turn, influence their decision to stay with their organization. They examined the dialect similarities and differences in work settings in China at the individual level, in order to assess the possible effects of regional cultural diversity in China. Their result illustrated a relation between dialect, self-categorization process and sense of fit. It also highlighted the benefit of speaking a dialect that is widely used within an organization. This paper drew attention to the influences of dialects at a workplace in China from an interpersonal communication perspective, however, since it only focuses on dialect or language dimension, some other regional and cultural variations are missing.

### **3.3 Personal Knowledge Sharing Barriers in an Organization**

A growing significance of information and knowledge sharing for organizations' competitiveness is seen, but some barriers could make it difficult to share and manage information and knowledge. Riege (2005) identified and discussed three dozen potential knowledge and information sharing barriers, which included individual/personal barriers, organizational and technological barriers. At the individual levels, barriers can involve three aspects: Weak at communication skills; lack of contact and interaction time; differences in cultural backgrounds, including languages; and lack of trust.

Numerous researchers and practitioners admit that poor communication and interpersonal skills can be a barrier for effective information and knowledge sharing (Riege, 2005). Some scholars (e.g, O'Dell and Grayson, 1998; cited in Riege, 2005) also emphasized on the lack of interaction time as a common barrier. Due to the time restriction, people might potentially hoard their information and knowledge; and they might focus on the tasks that are more urgent to them when they see time as a cost factor. Another potential barrier related to cultural backgrounds. Some researchers (e.g., Terpstra and David, 1991; cited in Riege, 2005) found that large cultural



diversity especially spoken language in the world economy could restrict business operations. Lack of trust in the person, who could misuse the information and knowledge, and the lack of trust in the accuracy and credibility of information and knowledge sources could prevent people from sharing information and knowledge (Riege, 2005).

Other potential barriers include apprehension of fear to share, little awareness of the needs and benefits of information and knowledge of others, differences in education level, age, experience, etc. (Riege, 2005). These barriers can often be intertwined. For example, a lack of interaction time could result in a lack of understandings and trust, and a lack of trust may stop people from further interaction.

## **Chapter Four: Theoretical Background**

In Chapter four, the authors introduce involved theories that might be able to explain the findings and later support the discussion part. They are Social Identity Theory and Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory, Uncertainty Reduction Theory and Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Theory, Communication Accommodation Theory, and Communication Privacy Management Theory. The authors decide to use these four theories because they are related to social categorization, interpersonal communication behavior, and privacy management, which are relevant to information sharing in a diverse group.

### **4.1 Social Identity Theory and Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory**

Social identity theory (SIT) argued that we live in a society where an important aspect of the social reality is “most social systems contain collections of individuals who differ from each other in a variety of ways” (Tajfel, 1981, p.46). Distinctions can be explicit differences in sex, gender, languages, etc. Humans are assumed to have the tendency and cognitive equipment to categorize the social world, and therefore can perceive themselves in several groups to gain positive self-images (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Brown, 2000). Based on these assumptions, SIT claimed that we have our social identities, which are part of a self - concept derived from group memberships together with the value and emotional significance attached to those particular groups (Tajfel, 1981; Brown, 2000).

Social categorization processes are presumed to engender more favorable attitudes toward ingroup than outgroup others, more trust, more willingness to cooperate, and smoother interaction with ingroup than with outgroup others (Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). It can be known as “ingroup favoritism”, which is an effect where people treat others in the same group better with a positive opinion on them.(Brown, 2000). There might be better and deeper information communication, more trust with a better and closer relationship within the group, and it could be the other way around if it is outside the group.(Chen & Tjosvold, 2007; Fairhurst, 1993; cited Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007).

Language can sometimes be one of the primary devices to distinguish human groups. According to Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory (Giles & Johnson, 1987), when groups’ linguistic characteristics are salient, people who see themselves as insiders of a particular ethnic group would value their language as a core feature of its identity. Thus, they may adopt a number of strategies to accentuate its in-group speech markers, such as switching to ingroup language, emphasizing ethnic dialects and so forth. Moreover, the high degree of perceived vitality and boundary hardness may

reinforce the group memberships and intensify their tendency to accentuate their group speech markers, such as ethnic languages and dialects. And those who regard themselves as belonging to various groups would have a more diffuse social identity (Giles & Johnson, 1987).

## **4.2 Communication Accommodation Theory**

There are various personal communicative styles, and it could be affected by ethnicity, occupations, genders, ages, etc. (Giles, 2008). When it comes to how different people with interpersonal diversity reach to the understanding towards each other, Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) can explain the interpersonal adjustment more contextually for this case study. “A feature of CAT is its capacity to account for the compelling process not usually accountable under the rubric of interpersonal communication, yet which are fundamental to it.” (Giles, 2008, p, 167)

### **Accommodativeness and Nonaccommodativeness**

Although notions of 'accommodation' have different meanings in different theoretical areas, in CAT accommodation is a process on how we can both reduce and magnify communicative differences between people in interaction. Accommodation is considered to be one of the main ways to achieving the former - and it does so by strengthening interpersonal similarities and thereby reducing uncertainties about the other. There could be convergence and divergence during the process of people adapting themselves. The effect of converging toward or "approximating" another has been shown to increase liking for the convergence. Convergence enables him or her to be seen as more competent and credible (e.g., Aune & Kikuchi, 1993; cited in Giles, 2008).

Convergence refers to “a strategy whereby individuals adapt to each other's communicative behaviors in terms of a wide range of linguistic-prosodic-nonverbal features (...).” (Giles & Coupland, 1991, p. 7) It implies what individuals have in common (Giles, 2008). Examples of Convergence can be dialect, speech rate, accent etc. Convergence shows the individual adaptation of communicative competence and social skills (Giles, 2008). The adjustments can be sorted into “upward convergence” and “downward convergence”:

Upward convergence: from lower status to higher status

Downward convergence: from higher status to lower status

While convergence show the similarities that individuals share; divergence show the difference in individuals, the dislike and the showing of belonging to another group. There is nonaccommodativeness when complete converse happens during their interaction with others. Divergence exists when the interactants consider that both of

them are from different cultures, community, speaking different languages, belonging to a different group. Identity and cultural traits influence the degree of divergence a lot (Giles, 2008).

Convergence can increase the liking from other individuals, and it is easier for a new person to adapt from the original identities (Giles, 2008). It should be noticed that the situations of CAT are very dynamic and very context-based. "An interesting feature of CAT is that communicators can adopt both accommodative and nonaccommodative stances with the same person in an attempt to convey contrastive identities." (Giles, 2008)

### **4.3 Uncertainty Reduction Theory**

Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT) tries to explain how people communicate when they are unsure about their circumstance (Afifi & Matsunaga, 2008). They defined uncertainty as "a function of the number and likelihood of alternatives that may occur" (Knobloch, 2008, p.134). It is a very subjective feeling one experiences about interaction. It occurs only when individuals believe they encounter doubts (Knobloch, 2008). URT assumes that people tend to seek for predictions and explanations for the social environments they are in; thus, the majority of individuals are motivated to reduce uncertainty about the surroundings (Knobloch, 2008).

To cope with uncertainty, three strategies can be used: seeking information, planning, and hedging (Knobloch, 2008). Seeking information involves passive strategies, which can be observing someone from a distance; active strategies, which refers to information-acquiring actions without actually interacting with the target person; and interactive strategies when people actually communicate with the target person. Setting a goal and keeping a plan in mind before or during social interaction is also a good way to cope with uncertainty (Planning strategies). Also, it is common as well to hedge against the potentially negative outcomes when someone attempts to interact with others under the conditions of uncertainty (Hedging).

Relations between self-uncertainty and in-group identification are examined. It is found that people identify more strongly with groups when they are feeling uncertain - uncertain about themselves, their behaviors, what is expected of them, and so forth (Hogg, Sherman, Dierselhuys, Maitner & Moffitt, 2007).

To adjust to a new culture or a new environment, strangers experience not only uncertainty but also anxiety (Gudykunst, 1998). Anxiety is "the tension, feelings of being uneasy\ tension\ or apprehension strangers have about what will happen when they communicate with hosts." (Stephan, 1985; cited in Gudykunst, 1998). But they do not try to totally reduce their anxiety and uncertainty (Gudykunst,

1998). On one hand, strangers can not manage a good communication with the host if uncertainty and anxiety are too high. On the other hand, when uncertainty is too low, strangers can be too confident to make accurate explanations and predictions of host's behaviors.

#### **4.4 Communication Privacy Management Theory**

Communication Privacy Management Theory (CPM) focuses on the process of people choosing the way not only to reveal but also conceal their private information. (Petronio & Durham, 2008). CPM argues that, when people disclose, they manage a push and pull of revealing or hiding private information (Petronio & Durham, 2008). According to this theory, private information is considered as the belonging to the owner, he or she has the right to decide whether or not to disclose own private information, according to what is the best choice (Petronio & Durham, 2008). During the process of one sharing private information to the other(s), the sender and the recipient become the co-owner of this private information, which also means both of the individuals share the boundaries of the private information and they are supposed to co-manage it. Also the "Boundary linkages" affect the privacy sharing. Boundary linkages refer to "alliances between a disclosure and his or her recipients." (Petronio & Durham, 2008, p,314)

Communication Privacy Management helps us to understand the unevenness of interpersonal interaction and also increase the understanding of the dynamics of relations, privacy dilemma, disclosure, etc. (Petronio & Durham, 2008).

## Chapter Five: Methodology

In Chapter Five, the authors go through the details of the methods used in the study. The whole process includes the process of getting into the field, selection of the interviews, interview questions design, data collection and data analysis. Last, they mention the ethical considerations.

The study was conducted in Nordic Chinese Christian Church in Gothenburg. The community has about forty members primarily from Hong Kong, Mainland China, Taiwan, Sweden and Southeast Asia. From 2017.2.15 to 2017.4.10, the two authors participated in activities such as Sunday service and fellowship group Bible study in the church and conducted interviews. Participant observation and in-depth interview were selected in this research. Totally 13 interviewees from different parts of the world were chosen. The number was respectively in proportion. Additionally, they differ in age, educational level, and languages, etc. It is wished that the interviewees can be the representatives of the church, to some extent.

### 5.1 Process of Getting in the Field

The process of getting in the field started from some connections as one of the authors had been going to this church for over a year. Before entering the field and conducting the study, they first submitted a study plan to the committee at the church of the church for their permission. After a discussion with all committees of the board, the two authors were allowed to start their study in the church. They were later gladly invited to four different fellowships groups for their observation and got the chances to interview people.

The four fellowship groups are coded, and they are (1) Group A, mainly for Chinese international master students and Mandarin is used there; (2) Group B, the members there are primarily the senior women used to live nearby. Cantonese and sometimes Mandarin or Swedish are used there; (3) Group C, for middle-aged and younger women speaking Cantonese; (4) Group D, for participants who can speak Mandarin. Both males and females, the old and the young can join in. Group A has gatherings each week and the rest each has a meeting once a month.

No.	Code	The major participants	Place of Origin	Language	Other details about the fellowship group
1	A	Chinese	Mainly from Mainland	Mandarin and	Members are

		international master students in Gothenburg.	China, and some are from Taiwan, Sweden, Southeast Asia.	sometimes English.	more transient as most international students leave after they graduate.
2	B	Most of them are women over 50 years old, with few academic training (primary school or middle school level).	They are from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Mainland China, and Malaysia.	Cantonese is often used, and sometimes they would shift to Mandarin or Swedish.	They have been in this fellowship group for more than a decade and are quite familiar with each other.
3	C	Mandarin speakers, including male and female, younger and older.	Mainland China	Mandarin	They used to live near Angered. Now the active members are Mandarin speakers from Mainland China.
4	D	Younger female (around 40) speaking Cantonese.	Most of them came to Sweden from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia when they were kids. And one was born in Sweden.	Cantonese and sometimes Swedish	Most of them have been in Sweden for over 30 years.

Table 1. Description about the four fellowship groups that the authors had observed.

## 5.2 Data Collection

The primary methods to collect data in this study are in-depth interview and participant observation.

### 5.2.1 Participant Observation

Observation is one of the primary methods in social science research. It is useful in studying the group activities, conversations and interactions as it can discover the meanings of such events (Angrosino, 2004). It can either be used alone or be paired

with one or more methods (Angrosino, 2004). Due to the interest in group behaviors and their information sharing within a church, observation as one of the data collection methods was selected.

To be more specific, a participant observation mainly focusing on small groups formulations and their information sharing was employed. Participant observation suggests some sorts of participants roles and involvement that researchers may have in a community (Bottorff, 2004). Since views from insiders and outsiders can differ and even oppose to each other, through participant observation, it is possible to describe the details of an event and an organization at least from the standpoint of participants (Jorgensen, 1989). Therefore, it is appropriate for studying relationships among people and events, the organization, and patterns (Jorgensen, 1989).

Furthermore, social scientists examined four observational roles in an observational study: (a) the complete participant; (b) the participant-as-observer (an insider with scientific training); (c) the observer-as-participant (an outsider who becomes a member of the community); and (d) the complete observer (Bottorff, 2004).

In this study, the authors focused on the way the members sit and stick to each other in Sunday service and in the coffee break section, to examine the relationship and subgroup formulation among them. They also participated in the Bible study meetings of the four fellowship groups which they were invited to. They chose these three events because they were the most frequent activities in the church, and they were also the events that the authors were allowed to join. The results of observation about Bible study meetings in different fellowship groups are discussed with the interviews. Thus, in the result part in the later section, the authors merge the results of observation about Bible study meeting with interviews.

One of the authors is a member of this church and has been there for around a year, while the other one is new to them; thus, they are the participant-as-observer (b), and the observer-as-participant (c). Fluency in Mandarin, Cantonese, good English, and basic Swedish enable the authors to get familiar with several churchgoers sooner and allow them better understand the participants during interviews. Although sometimes members of a few fellowship groups switched to Swedish, they didn't speak a lot, and some other members in the group would help translate to Chinese to the author; thus, Swedish is not a problem in this case. Those languages mentioned above are the languages used in this study. Besides, it should be clear that in this study, children will be excluded in the observation and the interview, as they are a very special group in this church and it can also be difficult for them to understand this study if they are invited to interviews.



### **5.2.2 Semi-structured Interview**

Interviewing is a principal alternative and complement to observation. The qualitative interview creates an event in which the interviewer can encourage another person to articulate interests or experiences freely (Lindlof, 2017). Through an interview, researchers can access experiential or subjective realities, gain a critical point in the sense making in communicative performances and practice; therefore, it is a preeminent method in communication and other social sciences. Even though it cannot present a completely accurate and objective report of an event, thoughts, feelings, or things in the world, interview talk can still be viewed as the rhetoric of socially situated speakers (Lindlof, 2017). Therefore, it can reflect an ontological position that is concerned with people's knowledge, understandings, interpretations, experiences, and interactions (Mason, 2004). Specifically, it may help in learning about things that cannot be observed directly by other means; understanding a social actor's perspective; inferring the communicative properties of interpersonal relationships; and verifying or commenting on data obtained from other sources, etc. (Lindlof, 2017).

The semi-structured interview has been demonstrated as a valuable method for gaining interpretive data. The broadly characteristic is that it has a flexible and fluid structure, which is usually organized around an aide memoire or interview guide rather than a specific sequence of questions. The aim is often to ensure flexibility in the ways questions are asked, and in the choice of particular areas might be followed up and developed with different interviewees. (Mason, 2004)

Thus, it is suggested that the logic of semi-structured interviewing is to generate data interactively. It means that both interviewer and interviewee have an active, reflexive, and constitutive role in the process of knowledge construction (Mason, 2004). The interactions between interviewer and interviewee could have some impacts on the collected data and the data interpretations.

The risk of semi-structured interviewing can be overlooking events and experiences that are important from the interviewees' point of view, that are relevant to the research but have not been anticipated, or that are particular to interviewees' ways of perceiving (Mason, 2004). It can also be influenced by the interviewer's own perception of the answers.

In this study, an interviewing questions list with seven questions was designed as an interview guide in this research. But it was not fixed, and it was adjusted every time with a different interviewee. To limit the risks, the two authors decided to conduct interviews together so that they could complement each other and keep on the same page about their understanding of the interviewing scene.

### 5.2.3 Interviewee Selection

The number of interviewees is up to thirteen, including church members from various parts of the world. Three from Hong Kong, six from Mainland China with two Cantonese speakers, one from Indonesia, one from Taiwan, one teenager born and raised in Sweden but originally from Hong Kong, and one middle-aged Taiwanese who was born and raised in Sweden. The number is basically and respectively in proportion. Among them, there are a pastor, committee member, members with primary and middle school levels, members with master's degree, international students, the second generation of a Chinese immigrant, a teenager, and an older in around 80s. Their time in Sweden and language vary to each other too. It is wished that the interviewees can be the representatives of the church, to some extent.

In order to protect the interviewees, the authors use M1, M2, etc., to refer to male interviewees; and W1, W2, etc., are referred to female interviewees.

No.	Code	Description
1	M1	One of the committees in the board. He came to Sweden from Hong Kong when he was around 10 years old and has stayed in Sweden for over 30 years.
2	W1	She moved to Sweden since around 15 years old, and she's over 35 now. W1 can speak fluent Swedish, Mandarin, and Cantonese. Apart from that, she also leads Bible study in group A and group B.
3	W2	W2 comes from Mainland China since the 1980s and is now about 80 years old. She can speak Mandarin and Swedish.
4	W3	Ethnic Chinese master student from Indonesia. She learned Mandarin when she studied in China before, but her mother language is Indonesian. She has just been in Sweden for a year.
5	M2 (pastor)	M2 immigrated to the UK about 30 years ago, and later he was hired to serve the church in Norway.
6	W4	Exchange master student from Mainland China. She can not speak Cantonese and Swedish.
7	W5	A senior woman came from Taiwan. Mandarin is the language she frequently used, but she also learned some Cantonese before she came to Sweden. She graduated from middle school

8	W6	A Senior woman from China mainland, but since she came from Cantonese-speaking areas, she was not fluent in Mandarin. She graduated from primary school.
9	W7	The second generation of Chinese immigrant teenager originally from Hong Kong.
10	W8	She came to Sweden to study master program. After graduation, she worked here and married to a Swede.
11	W9	She came to Sweden from Mainland China to study bachelor program. Now she works in Sweden and has been in the church for more than eight years. She can speak Mandarin, English, and Swedish. She can understand some Cantonese, but it is hard for her to speak.
12	W10	She came to Sweden from Hong Kong when she was around ten years old and has already been in Sweden for over 30 years.
13	W11	She was born and raised in Sweden but originally from Taiwan. She has been in Sweden for over 30 years. She is very fluent in Swedish but can also speak Cantonese and Mandarin.

Table 2. Description about the thirteen interviewees.

Interviewees in this study can be both respondents and informants as they were asked not only to recall their own experience and feelings but also to mention their observations and opinions about other individuals with similar backgrounds in the church occasionally. Most of the interviewees mainly acted as a respondent, but two interviewees worked as informants more because they had more chances to socializing in the church. One is the pastor (M2), and the other is a committee of the board (M1).

#### 5.2.4 Question Design

The interview started with some basic personal questions about the interviewees themselves including their places of birth, time in Sweden, time in the church and how they began to go to this church. In the second section, interviewees were asked several personal questions, for example, who they are close to and share more individual topics within this church, and how they think about the interactions between people from other culture, and if conflicts or misunderstandings exist during the time, etc.

When designing the questions of the interviews, the authors tried to make it easier for

the interviewees to understand. They used some words closer to daily life to replace the words “information” and “information sharing”, which are frequently mentioned in this study. For example, “what do you usually talk about?”. Although the authors were studying about the information sharing, it is noted that the word “information” in Chinese church means the same as the religious information members share to spread the gospel; therefore, in the interview, “topic” replaced the word “information” to avoid confusing the interviewees. For the same reason, “communication” or “communicate” will be used to make it easier for the participant to follow. And generally, those questions were also adjusted according to different interviewees.

### **5.2.5 Interview Process**

The interviews were conducted by the two authors (interviewers) together. If one interviewer missed the point, the other could complement it. The total interview time lasts for 342 minutes. Averagely, each interview lasted about half an hour. The interviewees were informed that the whole interview would be voice recorded, and they were informed about the purpose and ideas of this study before the interview started.

Ten interviews were conducted two-to-one (two interviewers and one interviewee) and face-to-face. Two interviews were through voice chats as the interviewees could not come. And one interview (with the senior women in Group B) was conducted in the similar form of the focus group with two interviewees at the same time. The interviews were carried out in a quiet environment to avoid interferences by other people, such as the office in the church, small study rooms in school’s library.

## **5.3 Data Analysis**

Twelve voice records were transcribed into a digital form on a computer in Chinese (Mandarin), and one transcription was in English (W7) as the interview was conducted in English. After sorting out and categorizing the text-form data into different factors that influence the communication, those needed to be presented in the paper were then translated into English. One of the authors, Jing Li transcribed most of the interviews, and Fen Bin transcribed the interview with the pastor (M2). It is necessary to note that the vocabularies and slangs in oral Cantonese are different from Mandarin in some way; thus, the authors made some adjustments to make it readable.

In this study, the authors focused on the results they collected from the interviews. They analyzed and categorized each potential influencing factor in the research questions with the interview data they collected.

## **5.4 Ethical Concerns**

### **5.4.1 Anonymity**

The authors are highly aware of the ethical problems of the research. As interviewees were supposed to share personal experiences and feelings, anonymity is of importance in this study. For the sake of anonymity, authors used M1, M2, etc, to refer to male interviewees and W1, W2, etc, to female interviewees. The name of the fellowship groups was coded as well. The names mentioned in the interviews were replaced by another that were randomly chosen in order to protect the participants. All the numbers of age and time in Sweden of the interviewees were slightly changed for the sake of anonymity, but they can still show the characters of the interviewees. The data will not be used beyond our academic purpose.

### **5.4.2 Roles of the Researchers**

Several ethical problems come along with the method of participant observation. One of them is about the role of the researchers. What can a researcher do in the organization? Being aware of this, the authors had informed the board of the church and received their permissions to conduct the study. They had kept updated and discussed with the board and other members about the study process and methodology. Moreover, it is necessary to keep in mind that not to share the stories they collected from one respondent to another.

### **5.4.3 Influence of Researchers' Involvements**

It is unavoidable that in the field work, the presences of researchers can affect the activities and the participants. The present of the researchers must, to some extent, change the situation that is being studied (Platt, 2014). During the observations in sunday service and fika (coffee break) sections, the authors tried not to involve a lot but just follow the routine. When they were invited to several fellowship groups, as newcomers to those groups, their presences could prevent some members from sharing deeper information. They tried to know them before joining.

## Chapter Six: Results

In Chapter Six, the authors present the result of this study. First, they map out the way people group together in the coffee break section after Sunday service to illustrate the subgroup formulation phenomenon. They also describe the way members seat in the sun service. Next, they analyze each factor that might influence information sharing with the answers they collected from the interviews. The factors include: cultural background, language, educational level, fellowship, age. Religion, and mix factors as the different factors are usually combined together are analyzed as well.

### 6.1 Observation of Coffee break section and sunday service

In this study, the authors observed the way members seated and gathered in the coffee break section and in the sunday service. The following part is first a map about the way members bound together in the coffee break time. In the last paragraph, they described the way churchgoers seat in the sunday service as well. The two authors were invited to the Bible study meetings of four fellowship groups to conduct their observation. This part of observation is discussed together with the results from the interviews, because the authors tried to verified their observation by the interviews.

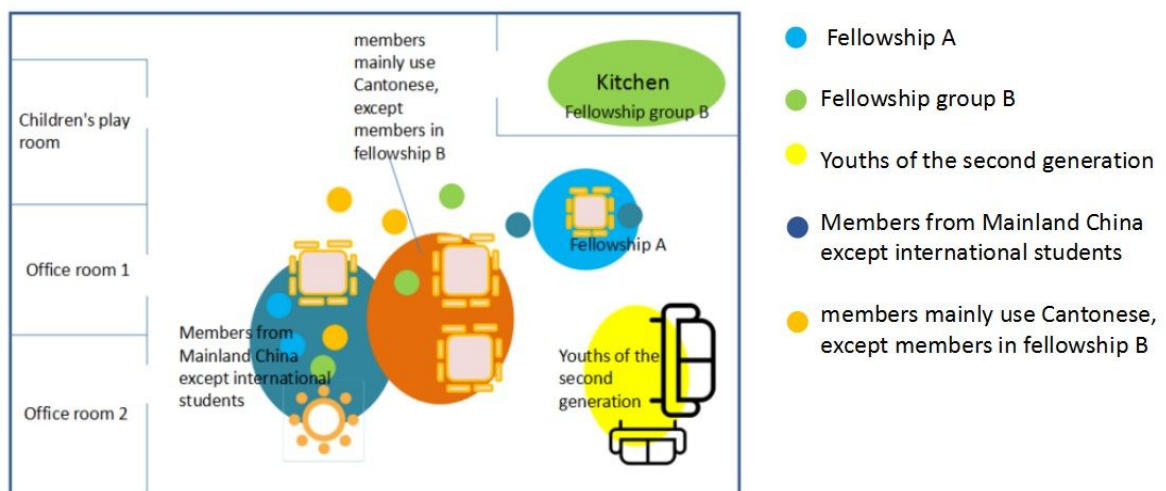


Figure 1. Observation of the way people seat in coffee break section.

This map presents the general situation of the ways people group and sits together during the fika time based on the authors' observation notes and interviews. It is noted that the amount of churchgoers and the individuals who go to the church for Sunday service varied each time. They moved from time to time as well during the fika time. The locations they seat in are not fixed. However, some general rules can still be found and they are valuable to look at.

In this map, color green represents members mainly in fellowship group B, elderly female with relatively lower education level. Color light blue represents members in fellowship group A, who are mostly international master students widely speaking Mandarin. Color yellow represents second generation youth from the youth fellowship. Pink color refers to children in the church. Dark blue refers to Mandarin speakers from mainland China except for international students, and color orange refers to members from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Southeast Asia, who widely use Cantonese, except members in fellowship B. Dots embedded in another circle refers to individuals who is from one group but can mix with another one group. The dots outside the circles are on behalf of the individuals who can mingle with several groups. They are not isolated but are better at mobility than others, and can mingle with several groups. The number of dots of different colors roughly shows whether there are many people who can mix into another group or not. For example, there are two light blue dots in the dark blue circle. This means that international master students from the church are much easier to mingle with other members from China mainland. In fact, when there are not many master student churchgoers showing up, the rest students who go to church would often mix with members from China mainland.

In most of the cases, those elderly female are responsible for preparing fika, and thus, they usually just stay in the kitchen. International master students are very likely to sit together at the table close to the entrance. The second generation of Chinese immigrant youths tend to gather near the sofa, and children often play at the playing room or are with their parents and relatives in the church. The exact location where different groups of people seat themselves can change, but still, they often bound together like that.

In the sunday service part, a general rule is that Hongkongese members would like to sit on the right while believers from Mainland China, Taiwan, the second generation of Chinese immigrant youths and some other members tend to seat themselves on the left side.

## **6.2 Cultural Background**

Despite the fact that Chinese from different places might be able to speak the same language. The place they were born and raised have a profound influence on their ways of thinking, acting, expressing and perceiving what other said. People from the same area have more common topics than with those have different cultural background. They are more likely to share more with people from the same place because it might be hard for other people to understand if they don't know the things about their hometown.

Differences in the cultural background are frequently mentioned by the interviewees, for members who came to Sweden when they were kids, people who immigrated to Sweden when they are already adults, and for the second generation Chinese. Below are some detailed examples introduced by someone who moved to Sweden at a young age.

As one of the members of the church committee, M1 doesn't often feel a significant difficulty in the language part, but he sometimes finds a cultural shock.

“The cultural difference could be brought to our church. That happens when we celebrate some important festival; the Mainland Chinese would usually like to make it as wonderful as it can. They sing, they dance, trying to make it festive, while Hongkongese would usually just say a few words, which is a Hongkongese culture, people don't usually say a lot.”

M1 also mentioned a barbecue party in a mid-summer, when he felt that it was a bit embarrassing for members from Mainland China to make such a feast and such a mess afterward, which he thought was supposed to be just a simple party. This year is the fortieth year M1 has been living in Sweden, so he considered himself have the Swedish style of thinking and Swedish way of living his life. “For some new Chinese immigrants, they might love carrying luxurious handbags, clothes, but for immigrants living here for a long time as I do, we don't think this is important to have, they are just additional for me.” Said M1. For members in charge of some affairs in church, those cultural shock can be subtle for them, but sometimes it can cause huge misunderstanding.

W1 moved to Sweden when she was around fifteen, and it has been more than twenty years she's been here. She can speak Cantonese, Mandarin, Swedish fluently, language is not the problem for the communication; however, it is the cultural background that makes the difference.

Based on her life experience, W1 has her understanding of the cultural difference she has been through,

“When I was in Mainland China, I found that people there were quite different from me in the way of thinking, social value, the way they are expressing themselves, and many other aspects. So I don't think I am a 100% Chinese. But if you say I'm a Swedish, that's not true either, because I came here since I was thirteen, and Chinese culture has been my cultural root. Besides of that, I would usually like to hold a critical attitude towards those plus and minus about Sweden and China, to make a balance, to learn from the plus and improve



myself from the minus. I would also compare the different ways between Chinese and Swedish culture in the way people communicate with each other.”

During the time W1 communicate with Chinese originally from other parts of the world, she sometimes meets some barriers. A big difference she found is the way she expresses herself. She is more direct while some Chinese from Asia can not bear it.

“Another thing that I found is that my personality is more close to the Swedish style. For example, I’m more straight forward, I don’t beat around the bush, I would directly point out the problem of someone, and this is the Swedish way. But it turns out this is very unacceptable for a Chinese, (he/she) would think’ you are criticizing me and this is very hurtful. Lots of negative emotions would come up (to the recipients). But I’m learning from it now, so I don’t know. I think there are some barriers. Yes, it is a very remarkable problem, which I didn’t notice before. (...)For example, if they (a Swedish) invite you for a meal, then they mean it. But if I’m at a Chinese’s home, if they ask you to stay for a meal, they probably just say it to be polite, they don’t actually mean it.”

There is another example that can more or less indicate the influence of cultural background on information sharing. W2 is about eighty years old now, and she moved to Sweden from China in the 1980s. W2 said that there are some topics she would like to share only to Chinese from Mainland China, since others don’t understand those issues without the equivalent backgrounds, and she feels tired to explain.

“We can usually have some basic topics to communicate, but it will become a bit difficult if we deepen the topic. But it doesn’t affect the communications within our souls. If you want to say something about your personal life experience, they haven’t been through the revolution (the cultural revolution), so I would rather find someone also coming from Mainland China. (He or she is) at the similar age (with me) and have some knowledge( about this issue), then we (can) have more common topics to talk about, some deep topics.”

When it comes to preaching and sermon, cultural diversity is also a problem because due to that, it is hard to find a topic that everyone can echo, according to the pastor (M2). The pastor has been going through those cultural differences through his life because he immigrated to Europe twenty years ago and he has been preaching in both Chinese and international churches for decades.

Since the pastor (M2) was born and raised in Hong Kong, he claimed that he had a very strong Hongkongese background. He used to talk a lot about Hong Kong, but then some churchgoers complained about that as they could not find an echo to them. Members from Mainland China were more familiar with stories from China while

youngsters were fond of local stories in Sweden. When he tried to make some adjustments in his sermon, difficulties exist.

“ (...)so after that, I watched some news from Guangzhou (a city in China mainland), and tried to use them as example when I preached. But that’s difficult because I didn’t grow up there. Although I can understand, they were not that excited to me. I talked about Hong Kong a lot before because this is the place I grew up, those are the things that I’ve been through.”

Gradually, he tends to use news stories happened in Sweden rather than those in China, as he finds that audiences are more interested in them.

“Sometimes I don't even mention about news in China. (...) Local stories (I mentioned). It is even more difficult for me because local news is in Swedish, and I need to read the translation. But it is good. I suddenly find that when I give local stories as examples, people are more interested in it.”

The second generation of Chinese immigrants worth studying as well. As they are born and raised in Sweden, they have been educated the Swedish culture and growing up in the Swedish society, and many of them probably consider themselves as Swedish. One of the interviewees, W11, who was born and raised in Sweden but originally from Taiwan, said that she just looked like a Chinese. It’s more comfortable for her to be with Swedish rather than Chinese. W7, whose parents are the first generation of Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong, was born and raised in Sweden. She has been educated the Swedish culture, which might contradict to the Chinese traditional culture her relatives were taught. As she was very keen to sports and part of the school team, her older relatives thought it was very boyish while her brother and her parents believe that it's ok. Therefore, she doesn't think she belongs to the traditional Chinese culture, but she doesn't consider herself a complete Swedish either. “ (...) this is really a hard question. I would say a mix, but when it comes to different things, I may feel more like a Chinese or more like a Swedish.” She said. She can represent the second generation of the immigrants.

According to the M2, W7, many second generations of Chinese immigrants find it hard for themselves to fit in either Chinese or Swedish group. Their values don’t match the Chinese traditional values sometimes, but the local Swedish sometimes don’t feel they are the same as them either because of their Asian faces. It is usually the case that the second generation of Chinese immigrants would talk and play with Chinese born and raised in Sweden. An example of the pastor (M2) can prove that it is still happening nowadays,

“In the Norwegian church I’m serving, I sometimes invite some Norwegians to

preach for the Youngster in our church. But if you ask them to go to the local Norwegian church, then they are unwilling to do so.”

He also mentioned that in an international church, the pastor there found it a problem that Chinese youngsters there always stick to Chinese, even if they were born and raised in Norway, and he found it tough to make them mingle with other Norwegians. It can be seen from those examples that the unique mixed cultural background makes the second generation have difficulty to find their group of belonging and people to share information with; therefore they have to choose youngster with the same background to communicate with.

Sometimes the influence of the cultural background can lead to bias. W11 was born and raised in Sweden, and she mentioned that she used to reject Chinese from Mainland China a lot. She recalled that it was because the negative news she heard about China. It shows that the stereotype of one certain culture may reduce the willingness to share information with people from that culture.

### **6.3 Language**

Diversity in language is seen in this church. Cantonese, Mandarin, Swedish and sometimes English are all used. Cantonese used to be a dominant language in the church as the majority of the participants were Cantonese speakers. As the number of Mandarin speakers increased, and they could not speak or even find it hard to understand Cantonese, some Cantonese speakers started to learn Mandarin to adapt to the new situation. For those Chinese second generations born and raised in Sweden, Swedish is their primary language, and they have their sermon in their fellowship using Swedish. Currently, there is usually a Cantonese - Chinese translation at every Sermon on Sunday Service. Despite the willingness to interact, and to learn new languages for many Cantonese speakers and Mandarin speakers, most of our interviewees claimed that diversity in the language dimension was an obvious influencing factor.

First of all, to members using distinct languages, such as Cantonese speakers and Mandarin speakers, talking, listening in the other language or doing both can be of a noticeable difficulty. These would directly affect the speed of information sharing and cause misunderstandings from time to time.

According to W1, speaking Mandarin was tough when she was just met people from Mandarin-spoken areas.

“ In the beginning, I could only read in Mandarin. It was not a problem for me to read the texts, but it was very hard for me to just have a simple chat in

Mandarin. I felt that I was tongue-tied when I talked to Mandarin speakers. I felt that I was not able to talk like there was a malfunction inside. However, I still had to take some time to (practice).”

In this situation, it can be even harder for ethnic Chinese from Southeast Asia or somewhere else, whose mother tongue is not Chinese. According to W3, who is from Indonesia, personal conversations in Mandarin is not difficult for her, but she could not understand Cantonese and sometimes finds it hard to understand the sermon.

“Sometimes I don't quite get the meanings in the sermon, especially when they started with Cantonese version and then turned to Mandarin. Because naturally, I will listen to the one speaking first, then I listen to the translation. So when I keep listening to Cantonese for a while, which I can't understand at all, then someone translates, I need to think, because neither of them is my mother tongue. But I kind of get used to it gradually.” (W3)

For the young second generation of Chinese immigrants in the church, their mother language is Swedish instead of Chinese. Swedish and English are more often used among them. Language is an obvious difficulty for them to communicate with other Chinese. M1, who has been in Sweden and the church for over thirty years, and is now a father of a second generation girl, put it,

“When we came, we were the first generation of Chinese immigrants, and now we have the second generation. Although they look like Chinese, they speak Swedish. (...) They are the Chinese who can not speak or can only speak little Chinese, so Swedish was added in our church. And we have Chinese Christian churches in Oslo, Gothenburg, Stockholm, and Finland, the languages in Finland totally differs from Swedish, so when those youths meet, they use English.”

It is consistent with the words by W7, who is the second generation of Chinese immigrant teenager in the church.

“ Well, obviously it is the language because I am not fluent in Chinese (Mandarin), and my Cantonese is a little bit, er (it's ok but not that good enough). Compared with the Hong Kong people, the local, it is very hard for me to kind of communicate in Cantonese. But when I try to use English, it might become struggling for them, finding it hard to use English. So it is like we've kind of torn in the language section.”

Also, it is interesting to note that, they seldom go to Swedish churches or international churches. The few second-generation youths who go to a local church may find

problems in integrating, according to the pastor's (M2) observation at an international church in Norway, which he assumed to be representative of Nordic countries.

“I observed that in their gatherings, Africans go together, people from Mideast go together, Hong Kong teenagers bound together. (...) Although they all can speak Norwegian, when they sit together, they turn to Chinese. But they have problems in Chinese churches also because their Chinese is not sufficient enough.”

However, the problems the second generation of Chinese immigrant youths are facing can be caused by a mixture of language issues, together with cultural crushes and generation gaps. And it can also be influenced by their parents. Misunderstandings or perceiving messages in another way could easily happen, as M1 mentioned,

“In our board, our committees are with a range of various backgrounds. For example, when I have a meeting (with them), I need to speak Mandarin because someone could not speak Cantonese. But perhaps some Cantonese accent would jump out when I talk, because I may not realize it or forget it when I keep talking. Then how do other people understand you (me)? Do they understand me the same as what I want to present? ( I don't know)”

In spite of the difficulties in communicating in various languages, for most believers, the willingness to interact with different language speakers, and the patience as well as tolerance as Christianity teaches, work as a glue helping narrow down the gap and solve the problems to some extent.

W2, who came from Mainland China more than thirty years ago and took Mandarin as mother language, addressed that it was tough to understand and communicate deeper with Cantonese from Hong Kong.

“(...) because (in the past) we could not understand as much Cantonese as we do now. At that time, those (people from Hong Kong) who had learned Mandarin would try their best to talk with us in Mandarin (...). That quite moved us. (...) They spoke Cantonese in the fellowship at that time, and I asked them to speak slower. I would ask them if I wouldn't understand.”

Members in fellowship group B are mixed with women from Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. They talked about how they communicate with participants in their group.

“For example, at that time, Mei used Mandarin more, her Cantonese was just

so-so, but we could get what she meant generally. Our Mandarin was not good enough, and she could understand us as well.(...) She said, you could use Cantonese, (...) and I said you could use Mandarin, and I would ask if I don't understand you. The point is, everyone (should be) humble and willing to accommodate; therefore, we can be in the same fellowship though we speak different languages.” (W6)

Based on the authors' observation, in their fellowship group meetings, they often started with Cantonese, and when someone has difficulties in talking Cantonese, they then changed to Mandarin or Swedish.

Religious teaching, especially the notion of unity and tolerance play an important role in the believers' interactions and communications. The influence of faith will be discussion later.

Secondly, for people who can speak the same language but differ in cultural background, confusions or misunderstandings can arise due to the differences in expression and slang. For example, both people from Mainland China and members from Taiwan use Mandarin, and some people from Guangdong or Guangxi Province in Mainland use Cantonese as Hongkongese do. However, they sometimes may not fully understand each other for the sake of culture diversity. As W1, who mainly speaks Cantonese but came from Mainland China in her teenage age put it,

“Generally speaking, it is not very hard to share information. But if you talk about some local news, for example, Hong Kong has its own Hong Kong culture, their jokes, or their favorite food, some adjective words they used would confuse me. Like in China (except Cantonese spoken areas), they have some particular words used there, (...) I have never heard about it, so I don't know. It makes some difficulties. But these are not some big problems, just some words, some adjective words that we may not know. It is OK basically.”

Furthermore, it is apparent that people similar in language dimension would easily and naturally bound together, learning from both the authors' observations at the church and the interview data. The language boundary could prevent individuals from interact and share deeper personal information with people talking in another language.

“I think it happens everywhere not just in the church. It is common because we talk about similar topics, think similarly, and it is easy to chat. So it is easy to bound together, at least, language won't be a barrier.” (W1)

However, it is necessary to note that, it is not just the language differences alone that

lead to grouping phenomenon. The cultural backgrounds, the language, and the experiences of moving to Sweden (e.g., the old Cantonese speakers were mostly working in the catering field when they just came to Sweden), all these attributes can result in this phenomenon and affect whom they would like to share their personal issues. As W9 mentioned it, a Mandarin speaker with international student background but has already worked in Sweden for a few years,

“They Cantonese speakers may have some fellowship groups, they are close in age, background, and language; and the experiences when they came to Sweden are similar, so perhaps they are easy to communicate with each other. We may find it easier to talk to students (from China Mainland and can speak Mandarin). The Swedish culture more influences the kids growing up here, they may talk to them easier. So they are not that willing to talk to us Chinese from Mainland China. I think we can understand them, but they just have a feeling of fear, not that willing to share, and only share (personal stuff) with the familiar members. This is just my opinion.” (W9)

Some more active members, who are more fluent in another language can mingle and swim in all the various groups more easily. In this case, it can be assumed that the capacity in languages is a key to integrating into another group.

“Joyce, she is a couple of years older than me, so she knows how to speak Chinese (Mandarin) and Cantonese, so she naturally finds it easier to communicate with students, but I feel I am a bit like, I don’t take the initiative enough.” (W7)

For other people, especially younger students and new church-goers, they can find the language boundary is apparent, and it is tough to get involved in a group with another language.

In fact, I seldom talk to the old Cantonese speakers, we just say hi, but I have never sat and chat with them. Every time after the Sunday Service, I will just sit at the table with other young people (international students). (...) There is no rule saying who sit where, but it is likely that everyone will just sit like that.” (W4)

“(...) when she introduces the students to me, then I kind of start talking to them. But people in my age, we all have kind of difficulties with Chinese and Cantonese, we are not fluent, so it takes a while for us to reach out that of the comfort zone. I think people in my age, at least, think the same.” (W7)

The pastor (M2) also provided an example in Norway, which he assumed was common in all Chinese churches in Nordic areas.

“One day, a university student who studies master program came. After the sunday service, he/she sits there seeming lonely. I came to him/her and talked. He/she told me, he/she did not know what other people were saying. The atmosphere was different. Then I said, if you don’t come, you are afraid of it, then there would be fewer and fewer people talking different languages here.”

When it comes to personal topics sharing, sisters or brothers in the same fellowship are the ones members would like to turn to when they have some personal and private problems, and similarity in language is not a key concern according to the interviewees. Nevertheless, since most of the participants in the same fellowship group speak the same languages, it probably can be assumed that people in the church are closer to members in same languages, and have a bigger possibility to share personal information with them, except two cases.

Two exceptions are the elderly ladies group with similar life experience and used to live nearby (Fellowship B), but differ in language, and the youth group for the second generation of Chinese immigrants. The elderly ladies are very close to each other and would like to share plenty personal information in their fellowship. While in the youth group for the second generation, in spite of the similarity in language and cultural background, they claimed that they did not feel close to each other. It can be the issue of fellowship as well.

Regarding religious information sharing, it is true that differences in language bring barriers to it, however, compared than English or Swedish, for Chinese speakers, listening to sermon in mother language - Chinese (both Mandarin and Cantonese) is still helpful for better comprehension. According to one respondent who also goes to a Swedish church,

“After all, we use our mother language in the Chinese church, so regarding sermon and (religious information) sharing, using your mother language helps you better understand the knowledge, have a deeper feeling, and share deeper.”  
(W8)

To sum up, it is undeniable that language differences are an obvious barrier to information sharing. For one thing, the lack of skills in another language can directly create difficulties for communication, among personal, religion and church affairs-related information. Capacity or skill in using other languages is an advantage to integrate into different languages users. Misunderstandings can easily happen when members can not pronounce or express correctly in another language. It is very likely the language diversity builds a boundary that stops people from interacting and talking to individuals using another language. However, the authors also assume that



this is mixed with differences in cultural background. To cope with the language barrier, believers in the church stress on tolerance and actively asking, which is very possibly thanks to the Christianity teaching.

## **6.4 Education Level**

The educational gap in this church is relatively large. Many of the older churchgoers only graduated from primary school or middle school, while some younger members from Mainland China have completed their studies at master's degree or above.

Variety in Education level has an impact on the sermon, preaching and religion-related information sharing. Also, people with a significant gap in educational backgrounds may have trouble in finding common topics, which stops them from further interacting and communicating. However, bias and discrimination are not common according to the respondents. In the following section, the author will primarily introduce the effects on religious information sharing and then mention about the consequence on personal information sharing, which is mixed with other factors.

First of all, in sermon or Bible study, contrast is evident to find. People received little education may have a simpler view about faith, concern more about their personal lives, but their skills in comprehension are not so good; while students with intense academic training tend to discuss religious knowledge in a more academical and complicated way. It could bring challenges for both the pastor who delivers sermons on Sunday Service and for members who leads Bible study for some less educated believers.

According to the pastor (M2), members who are less educated prefer speaking of their personal experience or some practical guidance based on Christianity, which can apply in their daily lives. This way of preaching may be too shallow in the eye of churchgoers with higher education.

“There are quite a few grassroots in our church, those who works at restaurants. So when international students came, they felt what I said were too shallow, for example, the words I chose. But if you talk too academically, the rest (the grassroots) don’t understand. (...) Another thing is, I usually mention about some practical instances which can be applied in your daily lives. We are not attempting to discuss and explore the origins of the world, and this may not meet the needs of some students with higher academic achievements. This is a limitation.”

For ministry in charge of the bible study for participants with less academic training, teaching and explaining knowledge related to the Bible is not easy. An interviewee

(W1) made a comparison between the teaching in fellowship groups with mainly master students and one with believers receiving less school education.

“Comparing my work here (group A) and there (group B), a challenge for me is, I need to talk a lot most of the time rather than letting everyone discussing together. (...) Because they (those with less school education) are not that good at expressing and critical thinking, I need to be more patient, and it looks like I often repeat and repeat the words.”

Furthermore, individuals vary in educational levels have difficulty in finding interesting topics in common, which sometimes will prevent them from not work-related interactions and share deeper personal information. In this church, this can also be mixed with the generation variety.

“I feel I am not that interested in what the older are talking. They just talk about some trivia, (...) like what they did, what vegetables they bought, very trivial.” (W9).

One more finding is that a number of the believers with less education would be objectively ignored by others, as they may not have the confidence to be an organizer or talk in public.

“I see them as very good Christians, trust in God with a simple and pure mind, and serve quietly.(...) If you ask them to do something in front of the public, for example, to be an usher (...) and pray on the stage, they don't want to do this. Because for them, it is like getting out of the comfort zone, or let's put it like this, they are afraid of being paid attention by too many people. They are worried that they are not good at clearly expressing themselves, so they resist doing such kind of things.” (W1, who leads the Bible study for the senior women with less school education)

“You can see that in the church, those who spend a little time in school and lack of academic knowledge are relatively easily ignored by others. In most of the cases, those who gain more attention are the ones having more knowledge, with communication skills or the ability to work. So I think they will be ignored.” (W1)

Except for the fact that grassroots can be objectively easily ignored, our interviewees claim that bias or discrimination is not common.

## **6.5 Fellowship**

Fellowship groups are primary parts in church. In a fellowship group, members usually

have something in common, such as international students or scholars speaking Mandarin, women used to live in a close neighborhood, etc. Members within the same fellowships have their gathering regularly every week, every other week or every month. Therefore, they spend more time with fellowship members, compared with other members of the church and become much more familiar with each other.

According to many interviewees, they are closer to each other because they spend a bit more time studying Bible and pray together. W8 mentioned,

“When we are in fellowship, we would share something deep, (though) we don’t interact that much in private. When we meet, we will share our lives, something that needs our fellowship members to pray for. If I met something that bothers and upset me a lot, I would first think of turning to the friends of my fellowship.”

During the time fellowship members studying the Bible together, they get the opportunity to know each other and can gain trust to each other. When members want to share some problems in life and let the others pray for it, they often share their personal lives.

“Sometimes when we meet some challenges and trials in life, something that we might be unwilling to tell some people, we would be willing to share within the fellowship. Because the fellowship is small and we know and trust each other very well. If we have more knowledge about each other, we can talk about some private topics”. (W9)

Also the more the fellowship members share the time together, the more things they do together and the more things they will share too. “Besides, sometimes brothers and sisters treat each other the delicious food they made, I think it’s very good. Of course, it is the best that we are united and loves each other as Bible requires” W3 mentioned. Members have the sense of belonging to this fellowship, and they treat each other as their family, which makes them feel comfortable to share private topics. But for the youth group of the second generation, it is a bit different.

“ I don’t feel very close to the other members in my fellowship group. (...) We are a lot of people in our fellowship, totally maybe 15 or something, but not everyone comes, so it is a bit hard to (share).” (W7)

## **6.6 Age**

In this case study, although it may be surprised, age is not a significant factor that influencing the information sharing, according to most interviewees’ experience. It

depends on different interviewees' personalities. Some even claimed that they were closer to older members than people in the similar age (W4, W5, W10). For some interviewees (the youth), the generation gap could be a problem with communication, which can stop them from sharing their personal lives. For the youth, age variety is a barrier for them to reach out of the comfort zone, but as the second generation youth group is a special one, the factors can be mixed with cultural gaps and language problems. According to authors' observation in the church, people from different ages can still interact a lots, but it is also noticed that those people with different ages are from the similar background, or at least speaking the same language. Though some senior members may be not that relatively lower in education level, some senior members with good education can still be close to younger participants. Therefore, based on the interview, it is more the cultural background, language and education level that influence the information sharing, and the generation gap is not that obvious in this case.

## **6.7 Influence of Religion**

Faith in Christ is highlighted by our interviewees as an important common ground among people in the church. Based on it, they can overcome difficulties resulted from the diversity. Particularly, it is found that it functions in mainly four aspects. It works as a useful tool to cope with differences in the church. It brings believers a sense of belonging to the church. The longer people have been believers in this church, the more they are likely to interact with other members differing in culture, age, education level, or else factors. And the longer one believes in Christianity, the more comfortable they feel to share deeper personal information with others.

It is common that the interviewees emphasized on the significance of faith during the interview processes, saying that thanks to the common faith they shared, they could embrace the diversity in the church. In practice, the authors found that, from the organization level, the notion of unity in Christianity helped shape the organization culture, which encourages churchgoers to accept different cultures of members from various places. According to M1,

“Our church can be a miniature of Chinese communities, but one thing for sure, those communities could have more and more conflicts, since they are more likely to stick to their previous habits and their own cultures as time flies. On the contrary, our church tries to find a different way. In spite of the differences, if you like to make dumplings, for instance, and I don't know how to do that, then I would like to learn, though I seldom eat dumplings when I was young. So this is an effect, (we do it) in the other way.”

In this case, the interviewees demonstrated that subgroup conflicts might occur more

frequently in other Chinese communities than in this church based on his observation. He assumed that when Chinese from different places within or out of China met in other Chinese communities, as they respectively might still firmly stick to their old cultures, it was very likely that some subgroup conflicts would occur. However, in the church, guided by the fundamental message of the Gospel, members seemed to be more willing to learn and accept other cultures.

From the individual level, the Christianity teaching trains them to be more tolerant and patience when difficulties and conflicts resulting from the diversity arise. Examples in the previous parts of Language and educational level, together with the following quote given by W6, a respondent in a fellowship for older women could imply this.

“I sometimes have problems in the fellowship group as well. Some people just said some hurtful words. I felt quite sad about that and even wanted to quit. But when I keep on listening to the sermon, I know that I need to forgive. Who has never made any mistake? (...) Diversity exists, but thanks to God’s love, we come together.”

Also, two interviewees addressed that they had received a sense of belonging to this church because of the faith rather than the Chinese ethnicity. W2, who has been in this church for about 30 years said that:

“When I came to this Chinese church, I also participated in a Swedish Christian church. (...) When I did the worship in that Swedish church, I put my heart on it as well and felt that kind of inspiration. (...) as long as you build a relationship with God, you could feel that kind of closeness.”

Another respondent (W3) who has just come to this church for around a year also claimed a sense of belonging due to the religion.

“Yes, very much. First of all, the church is the home of God. We Christians go to church every week, and it is like going back to God’s home. People there are sisters and brothers in God’s Kingdom, and that’s my family. That’s how I felt. (...) It is not because we are Chinese. If I go to another church (not Chinese church) seriously, I would have felt the sense of belonging as well. But surely I am happy to be with Chinese.”

Furthermore, according to the pastor (M2), in church, believers have a higher tendency to integrate with people from other places, which differs from Chinese who doesn’t go to church.

“(…) there are a bunch of individuals from Guangzhou (a city in China) in Stavanger, they would bond with Guangzhou people naturally. But some of them who go to the church, they can be mixed with us very well (not Guangzhou people). (…) we have a bus driver from Guangzhou, he has a strong bond with others from Guangzhou, but in church, he has interactions with many people that are not from Guangzhou.”

Regarding personal information sharing, in most of the cases in Christians practice, believers will turn to the pastor or some close sisters or brothers when they come across struggling in daily lives or in faith. After fellowship groups meeting, participants could share their recent concerns if they want, and allow everyone in the group to pray for him or her.

According to the pastor M2, it is likely that the more mature and healthier believers growing in faith, the opener and safer they could feel about expressing their personal issues. It also implies that they may tend to widen their personal boundaries within the church a little bit as they grow in faith.

“If he or she just becomes a Christian, they will only share their personal problems with a pastor and tells the pastor not to mention it to someone else. (…) This is what I come across, it is a fact, not easy (for them) to speak out. But as they are growing up in faith, they become more willing to share (their personal) to allow others to pray for them.”

The pastor would slowly encourage believers to speak out their personal problems. In the beginning, they might only talk to the pastor, and then they seem to share with fellowship members and more other believers. But he admitted that these works were time-consuming and needed to be done very careful.

Moreover, members believing in God for a longer time are more likely to win more trust, and thus some other believers would like to share some private issues with them and pray with them. Topics related to experience in God may stimulate believers to share deeper personal information as well.

## **6.8 Mixed Factors**

During the time the authors collecting the data, they found that in many cases, the communication was influenced by several mixed factors. For example, each fellowship group is often similar in several aspects, such as language, cultural background. For example, the differences between the teenage fellowship and the fellowship C are not only the age difference but also the cultural background difference, and that make it difficult for them to communicate and share information,

to some extent. It is not that easy for some Chinese students to talk with the ladies in the fellowship B either. The effecting factors could be the age, the cultural background and sometimes even the educational level.

Therefore, it is usually not just a single factor that leads to the information sharing barriers. It is more about several factors that matter.

## **Chapter Seven: Discussion**

In the discussion part, firstly, the influence of diversity on the three different kinds of information sharing are explained. Secondly, chosen theories are used to analyze the results. Methodology, potential limitations, and possible practical contributions are discussed as well.

### **7.1 Influence on Practical Information Sharing**

Practical information includes daily practical tips as well as information related to church affairs in this study. If it is possible to overcome the language barrier, the willingness of sharing practical information regarding daily life, such as tips on living in this city, dressing, cooking, would not be decreased by the diversity. Instead, the variety of practical information and knowledge the individual have may encourage them to seek and share information. It could be relied on what skills and characteristics an individual have. As some interviewees reviewed, they preferred to ask a certain person about some practical information because that person was skillful or helpful in a particular field. Moreover, from the author's observation and interview, such practical information related to daily life are the topics people often shared at fika time as kind of casual talks.

Concerning the practical information sharing related to church affairs, cultural differences and language problems may sometimes stand in the way and influence the decision-making. As an example given in the result part implied, when planning a party, some members from Mainland China would like to make a big feast while some Hong Kong members preferred a simple one. This kind of cultural diversity could bring conflict in the process of decision-making. Although some Hongkongese strive to learn Mandarin to adapt to Mandarin speakers, sometimes they could not avoid the strong Cantonese accent, which could cause some misunderstandings occasionally.

Other individual barriers, such as short in interaction time, are reflected as an obvious barrier to seek and share practical information, based on interviews. Trust in one's skills, knowledge and personalities could encourage the practical information seeking and sharing behaviors. Communication skills may benefit members in church affairs-related information sharing and negotiation with others in the process of decision-making. But it is necessary to note that, since these personal barriers are not the primary focus of this study, more evidence and studies are needed to understand how such potential individual barriers influence practical information sharing.

Generally speaking, if language skill is possible to talk, diversity does not affect the willingness of sharing practical information related to daily life. Various cultural



values, tradition, and language could have an impact on the decision-making associated with church affairs. Interaction time, trust and communication skills could have an influence on both kinds of practical information sharing, which needs further studies.

## **7.2 Influence on Religious Information Sharing**

Religious information refers to knowledge about Christianity in this case. Language, educational level, and cultural background have an apparent influence on religious information sharing.

Language is a direct barrier for members to understand the religious information and knowledge. It was an obvious challenge in the past, especially when members from Cantonese-speaking areas (e.g., Hong Kong) could not speak much Mandarin, and participants from Mainland China could not understand as much Cantonese as they do now. It could be even tougher for members from outside China, whose mother tongue is not Chinese at all. In Sunday service, the Cantonese-Mandarin translation and the Swedish sermon for second generation Chinese immigrants help members differing in language gain a better understanding of the words. In fellowship groups, when people are speaking different language meet, some basic knowledge of the other language is necessary; otherwise, it could still be hard to learn deeper. The negative influence may decrease as people gradually get used to the situation and become more familiar with each other. But in general, it is still hard to have some deep discussion about Bible if a language difference exists.

The impact of the big education difference in the church is shown in the different ways of discussing Bible between people receiving few school education and those with higher educational level. Compared with the Bible study activities between two fellowship group varying in educational level. Believers with higher educational level have more academic or philosophical discussions related to the Bible, while members with few academic education share more about their daily lives but may have a shortage in critical thinking. It could be a challenge for ministries who lead the Bible study.

For the pastor, the educational difference is a big challenge as well. On one hand, they need to ensure that the grassroots with little academic training could understand them. On the other hand, their topics should not be too shallow for the higher educated people. It is not easy to balance. From the interviews and the authors' observation, adaptation to less educated members is more common.

Diversity in the cultural background does not have a visible impact on discussions in Bible study according to the interviewees. However, it caused some problems in sermons according to the pastor. People growing up in one place can find it hard to fully understand stories happening elsewhere, since they lack the living experience in

that location, or they may find those stories less attractive. When it comes to selecting examples using in a sermon, cultural diversity is a problem to concern.

### **7.3 Influence on Personal Information Sharing**

Many of the interviewees mentioned that they would like to talk about some personal topic with friends in the same fellowship, as they spent longer time together in the fellowship, compared with other members of the church. And as the authors newly joined another fellowship, one of them found herself finally started a conversation with a member of that fellowship, who she ran into many times in the past one year but never talked with. So fellowship is a comfort zone for most members, where they feel comfortable to share personal life. Based on the observation, members within the same fellowship might start with some basic personal information. After they study Bible together and pray for each other many times, they can feel closer to other in the same fellowship group. The more they spend time with each other, the more trust they gain; and thus, members feel like sharing their private life within the same fellowship group.

Behind the influence of the fellowship, it is the influence of cultural background, language, and religion that intertwined with each other. According to M1, the members of the church were first grouped into different fellowships based on their similar locations; besides that, the same language was spoken in the same fellowship, which led to the assembling of members with a similar cultural background. Additionally, religion is not the least factor that affecting it. Many interviewees told the authors that they would prefer to talk with the pastors, or members who have become believers for many years about their very private issues that they don't want others in the church to know. The pastors would also encourage believers to be open to share and to allow other to pray for them.

Therefore, it can be seen that, in the beginning, the similar cultural background and languages brought members together to the same fellowship, and they started to share personal information within the group. As time went by, and as religion has deeper and deeper influence on the individuals, they have more trust in each other, and they feel more comfortable to talk to other in the fellowship. Fellows in the same group would keep this as a secret within this fellowship and pray for this personal problem to be solved.

### **7.4 Discussion the Practical and Religious Information**

It is interesting to find that convergence is much more evident in religious information sharing and practical information sharing to minimize the social differences. Interpersonal adaptation has been stressed by many interviewees.

According to communication accommodation theory (Giles & Coupland, 1991), convergence is defined as “a strategy whereby individuals adapt to each other's communicative behaviors regarding a wide range of linguistic-prosodic-nonverbal features (...).” (Giles & Coupland, 1991, p. 7) There are upward convergence: from a lower status to higher status; and downward convergence: from higher status to a lower status. It is naturally occurring in contexts to reduce the social differences between communicators (Giles & Coupland, 1991).

In a sermon, for example, it is seen that the pastor would use convergence as a strategy to deal with the cultural and educational differences. His attempts to learn news stories happened in the hometown of other members and to find out something that is interesting to most churchgoers, are some examples of convergence, aiming to narrow down the cultural differences and to achieve a shared understanding of God's messages. Downward convergence is seen when problems caused by the educational diversity arise. For instance, the pastor tries to use simple words, practical cases to adapt to the less educated audiences, who are still the majority in the church. In the Bible study in group B, the member who leads the Bible study claimed that she needed to adapt to the other believers, who received much less academic training and may be slow in understanding complicated religious knowledge. In both cases, downward convergence is required and found.

Convergences regarding language are found in sharing religious information. As W2 reviewed, Hongkongese who could speak some Mandarin shifted to Mandarin to her, allowing her had a better understanding of the Bible. It was common when Chinese immigrants from Mainland China increasingly came to Sweden. Quite a few church members mainly from Hong Kong gradually learned Mandarin to adapt to these new immigrants.

Regarding practical information sharing, convergence is also used as a tool to cope with differences. For example, M1 tried to learn how to make dumplings though that was not his traditional food. However, convergence is not an easy task. It requires knowledge of other cultures, tolerance, language skills, etc. If learning a new language is too hard to achieve for some individuals, they can find it hard to converge and to adapt to different groups. Additionally, though different fellowship groups were divided based on locations, in the beginning, people tend to go to the group with similar language and cultural backgrounds, and gradually, a noticeable feature is that fellowship groups are chartered in similarities in language and cultural background.

Another aspect worth of discussing is regarding uncertainty reduction. From uncertainty reduction perspective, people may experience uncertainty about their circumstance in interpersonal communication (Knobloch, 2008). URT assumes that

people tend to seek for predictions and explanations for the social environments they are in (Knobloch, 2008). It is noted that active information seeking behaviors, especially interactive strategies are important to members in religious information sharing. They stressed the need to ask directly if uncertainty about bible's messages arise in Bible study. However, one respondent (W8) also admitted that when new members were invited to her fellowship group, she would hesitate to ask sometimes. It can be assumed that both uncertainty and anxiety could be experienced when circumstance changes. When anxiety is high, they may try to hedge or not to reduce their uncertainty rather than actively seeking information. Although not enough data about newcomers in the church is collected in this study, the authors assume that newcomers could have difficulties in managing uncertainty and anxiety; therefore it will be of interest to look at their ways to manage uncertainty and anxiety at the stage of adjusting to the church in the future.

## **7.5 Discussion the Personal Information**

The phenomenon that members prefer to share their personal information with friends within the same fellowship, where there is a similarity in language, cultural background, can be seen as a kind of in-group behavior and ingroup favoritism. People identifying themselves belonging to the same group would have more trust, more willingness to cooperate and share information; thus, they may feel more comfortable to share deep personal concerns within their fellowship group. As individuals spend more time with each other, they experience a higher sense of belonging to the fellowship and in return strengthen their group identity. When a newcomer joins in their group, some of the old members are likely to regard the newcomer as an outsider and hesitate to share deeper personal information. It is very likely that linguistic characteristics are very salient in all different groups. Although in every fellowship group the authors participate in, there are one or two members who are not fluent in the language that is frequently used in the same group. They adapt to the majority until they have problems to make themselves understood. The linguistic characteristics also strengthen group boundaries and increase the hardness to enter the group. For instance, people who cannot speak Cantonese have much fewer chance to share personal information with Cantonese speakers although they may both be able to speak Mandarin, English, or Swedish.

From another perspective of uncertainty reduction, the behavior of the individual seeking their fellowship members to sit with and talk with can be seen as an act of avoiding uncertainty. It is proved by some empirical studies that people identify more strongly with groups when they are feeling uncertain (Hogg, Sherman, Dierselhuis, Maitner & Moffitt, 2007). In a diverse group, lots of uncertainty can be met. When individual intends to talk with members unfamiliar with, he or she might don't know what to expect, how to initiate the conversation. They could be afraid of the

awkwardness as well. Therefore, sticking to someone they are familiar with at Sunday service as well as during fika can reduce the uncertainty they might meet the other way around.

Because of the intimacy, the fellowship brought, individual's privacy management has also been influenced. After a period of interaction, and also due to their religion, they share more "boundary linkages". They feel more secure and comfortable to reveal more and hide less of their private information. As other members in the fellowship who received this personal information, they felt obliged to keep this only within this fellowship, to not let others know and to help to solve the problems sometimes, which is a proper co-management for that privacy.

## **7.6 Discussion the Possible Methodological Limitations**

Some potential limitations of this study needed to be acknowledged. First of all, it is necessary to discuss the sample size. Totally 13 members differing in age, cultural background, education level, language, time in Sweden, positions in the church, were chosen as interviewees in this research. The authors tried to reach as many churchgoers as they could, but it was inevitable that due to the lack of time, and the easiness to approach to more active people, some members who were not that active could be ignored. Since the number of church members is around 40, the sample size is still good enough.

Limitations existed in the observation processes as well. Because the observations in this study were recorded only by taking some notes, and participants moved often, it was hard to capture an accurate picture of the ways people gather together. It was hard to follow their chatting topics all the time during the fika time too. Therefore, rather than relying on observation data to come to a result, the authors used their observation as a reference and indicate to direct their research in some way. They first discussed their observations, then verified their observations by asking different interviewees and analyzed by combining both interviews and observations. Even though the observations were not very accurate, it could still imply some patterns.

Regarding the interviews, first of all, it is a usual case that people reflect their past experience or their observations of some events subjectively. Due to the fact that different participants might vary in the time in the church, social networks, personalities, etc. when reflecting their opinions about others, they may not actually review objectively and comprehensively. The authors, therefore, did some verifications by asking different interviewees, and they also considered some other personal information sharing barriers such as interaction time, trust and communication skills in the discussion part, though they were not the factors the authors attempted to study. By doing so, the results could still be representative. Two interviews were conducted via WeChat (audio only). Nevertheless, the

computer-mediated communication did not strongly affect the interviews and would not influence the final results, because only verbal data was included in this study. Another consideration is the author's gender. Since the two authors are female, they were not allowed to be invited to brother groups. The perceptions about the influence of gender were only from the interviews of some male respondents. However, as the majority of churchgoers are female, it could still be representative in some way.

## **7.7 Discussion the Practical Contribution and Future Research**

The practical contribution can be helping the church to identify and have an insight of their communicative problems. It could also help Chinese immigrants from Mainland China and outside China to understand each other and to optimize their communication better. Furthermore, this study provides some empirical evidence about the diversity and communication problems of Chinese immigrants in Sweden, which could be applied in other Chinese communities. Additionally, such kind of diversity and communication challenges could exist in other ethnic groups in Sweden; thus, it would be interesting to readers who would like to have an insight of problems within an ethnic immigrants group. This study points out the challenges the second generation of Chinese immigrants faces. And it also reveals a range of factors that might make a difference on communication in a heterogeneous group, though the case in a church could be a bit special. For professionals and anyone in the field of religion, this study provides them a particular case to understand the challenges of diversity in a Chinese Christian community.

Based on the study, the authors suggest for further researches on the changes between new Chinese immigrants and older Chinese immigrants. It is also necessary to look into the dissimilarities and communication challenges within an immigrant group in Sweden. Attention to the second generation of immigrants in Sweden, and diversity challenges to church, or in the field of religion is needed as well.

## Chapter Eight: Conclusion

In this study, the authors investigated several factors' influence respectively on practical information, religious information and personal information. The qualitative nature of the study does not allow the authors to draw conclusions that can be extended to the whole immigrant's communities, but interesting findings and conclusion can be found below.

1. Cultural background and language can be seen as two most influential factors for information sharing of the members in this church, but phenomena of mixed factors are found. The influence of differences in education level becomes apparent in religious information sharing. Fellowship group is a crucial influential factor in personal information sharing, which can be seen as an ingroup behavior. Religion is also a significant factor for gaining trust to sharing more private information. Age is not an important factor in this case.
2. Ingroup favoritism is found among members of the same fellowship groups. Fellows in the same fellowship group often share more privacy "boundary linkages". Linguistic characteristics are salient and can strengthen the group boundary. Diversity can bring more uncertainties, and to reduce it, people tend to stick to someone similar or familiar with. Convergence is necessary and widely found in practical and religious information sharing. Active interactive strategies are necessary to reduce uncertainty in religion information, but anxiety can prevent them from actively seeking information.
3. The common belief gives members a sense of belonging to the church. Because of the religious reasons, members try to converge and to adapt themselves to others. It can also encourage them to be more tolerant, to interact more with different people, and to share deeper personal information with the help of pastors and Christianity teaches.

The Nordic Chinese Christian Church can be a miniature of Chinese immigrants community in Sweden. It is expected that the findings of this study could help Chinese immigrants to reach to a better understanding of their communication problems. It could also become a reference for the communication challenges among different Chinese communities. The diversity and the communication challenges among Chinese immigrants can be similar to those existing in other ethnic immigrants groups as well; thus, it is necessary to be aware of them. Tolerance and understanding are necessary for the information sharing within this church, or even the whole Chinese society in Sweden. To learn the diversity and to accommodate, instead of holding a standard of one's own, is the right way to improve the communication.

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# Appendix

## Interview questions

Basic information:

1. Place of birth; 2. Language; 3. Age; 4. Education levels; 5. Career/Professions; 6. Time settled in Sweden

Interview Questions:

1. When and how did you come to this church?
2. Do you feel a sense of belonging in this church? If any, in what way?
3. Did you try to look for any Chinese ethnic groups when you came to Sweden? (For Chinese immigrants, excluding the second generation) Did you find it hard to get into the Swedish Chinese society? If any, in what ways? And can you give an example?
4. Who in this church are you closer to? Do you have anything in common?
5. What topics do you usually share with them? In what kinds of situations? What about conversations with other members in this church?
6. Which fellowship groups are you in? What kinds of topics will you share in those groups? Will you share different information in different groups?
7. Do you find any difficulties in communication and information sharing with various members in this church?

## Quoted Answers

### Cultural background

譬如说有一些庆典，那如果我们看国内的庆典节目，就是很壮观，大家都很投入，这个是国内的一种文化，对这些事物的重视。但是呢，譬如说香港的文化，这些东西呢就认为是一种很老土。用香港的文化，就最好说话呢就直接点，不要说太多废话，你要唱都不要唱完，唱几句就够了，什么都要快，什么都要简而精。但是比如说国内的一些文化它不是这样的。它要朗诵，还要又唱又跳，很多事。那么这些都会带进教会的。

“The cultural difference could be brought to our church. That happens when we celebrate some important festival, the Mainland Chinese would usually like to make it as wonderful as it can. They sing, they dance, trying to make it festive, while Hongkongese would usually just say a few words, which is a Hongkongese culture, people don't usually say a lot.”

但是我去到国内的时候我发现大家的那个思维、价值观、说话还有很多的方面都开始有出入，不是一样的，所以我又觉得我不是一个彻彻底底的中国人。但是如果说我是瑞典人，我又不能说我是瑞典人，因为我十四岁才来瑞典，所以很多东西都已经是落地生根的了。还有另外一件事是，我会用一个分析的态度去看，瑞典有它的这些好的，这些不好的；中国有它的这些好的，这些不好的，这样去做一个平衡，去做一个取舍。另外就是认识自己的文化，那些背景。比如说一些待人处事的，和瑞典人的待人处事的（方法）有什么出入，有什么不同。

“When I was in Mainland China, I found that people there were quite different from me in way of thinking, social value and the way they expressed themselves, and many other aspects, so I don't think I am totally a 100% Chinese. But if you say I'm a Swedish, that's not true either, because I came here since I was thirteen, Chinese culture has been my cultural root. Besides of that, I would usually like to hold a critical attitude towards those plus and minus about Sweden and China, to make a balance, to learn from the plus and improve myself from the minus. I would also compare the different ways between Chinese and Swedish culture in the way people communicate with each other.”

那如果我的性格或者我的偏好其实是瑞典的方面比较多一点，比如说我说话比较直接。还有有时候我看到一件事，我是不会去婉婉转转地去兜一个弯，我是直接就去说那件事，就会说这样做不是这么好，这样这样。但是这样就是瑞典人的做法，就是对事。就比如说如果这样说完之后，原来对一个中国人来说是接受不了的，你在批评我我就觉得很

受伤啊，然后就有很多很复杂的情绪上的这些东西。但是这一个我还在学习当中，所以我也不知道，所以我觉得有点障碍。是的，这是一个很大的问题。我一开始的时候并不知道。

“Another thing that I found is that my personality is more close to the Swedish style, for example I’m more straight forward, I don’t beat about the bush, I would directly point out the problem of someone, and this is the Swedish way. But turns out this is very unacceptable for a Chinese, (he/she) would think’ you are criticizing me and this is very hurtful’, and lots of negative emotions would come up. But I’m learning from it now, so I don’t know, I think there is some barriers. Yes, it is a very big problem, which I didn’t notice before. (...)For example, if they invite you for a meal then they mean it. But if I’m at a Chinese’s home, if they ask you to stay for a meal, they probably just say it to be polite, they don’t actually mean it.” .

可以一般的沟通，但是比较要深入的就有点难。但是这个不妨碍在灵性里的沟通，这个是不妨碍的。你说要讲述一些私人的生活经历啊，他们没有经历过运动（文化大革命），也没有经历过这些事情，那么我就会去找跟我年纪相仿的，大家是从大陆出来的，对于这样的一层知识分子，我们比较有共同的语言，可以讲得深一些，也可以在祷告当中知道我们欠缺的是什么。

“We can usually have some basic topic to communicate, but it will become a bit difficult if we deepen the topic. But it doesn’t affect the communications within our souls. If you want to say something about your personal life experience, they haven’t been through the revolution (The cultural revolution), they haven’t been through those things, so I would rather find someone also coming from Mainland China, at the similar age and have some knowledge, then we have more common topics to talk about, some deep topics.”

所以后来我就改。我就看一些广州台，广州的新闻。但是是很困难的，因为我不是在那边长大。（虽然）我明白，但我不会说得很有感情。我知道这件事，我说出来可以，但是我不说得（像说香港新闻）那么过瘾，因为那个（香港的事情）是我的经历，我熟悉的环境。

“ (...)so after that I watched some news from Guangzhou (a city in China mainland), and tried to use them as example when I preached. But that’s difficult, because I didn’t grow up there. Although I can understand, but there was less affection so they were not that excited to me. I talked about Hong Kong a lot before, because this is the place I grew up, those are the things that I’ve been through.”

我甚至有时候就不再去说国内的新闻了。我说什么呢？本地的（挪威或是瑞典）新闻。那这个更加困难的，因为本地新闻要去看瑞典文，那我就看他们的译文，那个也是一个困难的地方。不过也是好的。我突然觉得，举本地的例子呢，是大家比较有兴趣的。

“Sometimes I don’t even mention about news in China. (...) Local stories (I



mentioned). This is even difficult for me because local news are in Swedish and I need to read the translations. But it is good, I suddenly find that when I give local stories as examples, people are more interested in it.”

那所以在挪威，比如我自己的那间教会，那些小朋友、那些少年，我有时候都请一些挪威人回来给他们讲。但是你让他们去到挪威人的教会，他们又不想。，像我们挪威的教会呢，那里的年轻人有讲挪威话，如果让他们去挪威人的教会他们是不愿意的。

“In the Norwegian church I’m serving, I sometimes invite some Norwegians to preach for the Youngster in our church. But if you ask them to go to the local Norwegian church, then they are unwilling to do so.”

## Language

我最初的国语只是可以读书的，就是读才可以，但普通沟通是很难的。我也会觉得说和那些说普通话的人说话好像舌头打结似的，就好像说不了话似的，都会觉得有个障碍在里边，但是还是要自己拿出时间（去练习）。

“In the beginning, I could only read in Mandarin. It was not a problem for me to read the texts, but it was very hard for me to just have a normal chat in Mandarin. I felt that I was tongue-tied when I talked to Mandarin speakers. I felt that I was not able to talk, like there was a malfunction inside. However, I still had to take some time to (practice).” (W1)

就是有时候讲道不是很听得懂，特别是如果他们是讲广东话，然后转到中文（普通话）。因为我一般都会很自然地听谁先说，然后再听翻译，所以在这个方面有时候我一直在听讲广东话的那个，但是我不懂，然后有人翻译，我也要想，因为这两个不是我的母语。但是慢慢就习惯了。

“Sometimes I don’t quite get the meanings in the sermon, especially when they started with Cantonese version and then turned to Mandarin. Because naturally I will listen to the one speaking first, then I listen to the translation. So when I keep listening to Cantonese for a while, which I can’t understand at all, then someone translates, I need to think, because neither of them is my mother tongue. But I kind of get used to it gradually.” (W3)

我们来的时候，我们叫做第一代的中国入，但现在我们有第二代了，他们的样子虽然还是中国人，不过他们说的话就是瑞典话，那就变成又多了一个新的一代的华人，他们是不会说，或者只会说很少中文的一帮华人。那变成我们教会又要用瑞典语。但因为我们北欧有几个地方，有Oslo, Gothenburg, 有Stockholm, 现在又有芬兰，你知道芬兰的芬兰语和瑞典语是完全两回事的，那变成这些青年人走到一起他们有什么来交流呢？最后就用英文了。

“When we came, we were the first generation Chinese immigrants, now we have the

second generation. Although they look like Chinese, they speak Swedish. (...) They are the Chinese who can not speak, or can only speak little Chinese, so Swedish was added in our church. And we have Chinese Christian churches in Oslo, Gothenburg, Stockholm and Finland, the languages in Finland totally differs from Swedish, so when those youths meet, they use English.” (M1)

“ Well, obviously it is the language because I am not fluent in Chinese (Mandarin), and my Cantonese is a little bit, er (it’s ok but not that good enough). But compared with the Hong Kong people, the local, it is very hard for me to kind of communicate in Cantonese. But when I try to use English, it might become struggling for them, finding it hard to use English. So it is like we’ve kind of torn in the language sections.” (W7)

我观察到他们聚会的时候，真的是非洲人一堆，中东的，就是伊拉克、伊朗的那些一堆，香港人一堆，日本有两三个，人少一点，就跟着亚洲人的那一堆。然而大家都会说挪威话的，就是一坐下来，这群青年人（华人青少年）就很自然地说回中文，扎堆。但是他们（华人青少年）去中文教会又有问题，他们的中文能力又不够，这又很麻烦。

“I observed that in their gathering, Africans go together, people from Mideast go together, Hong Kong teenagers bound together,(...) Although they all can speak Norwegian, when they sit together, they turn to Chinese. But they have problems in Chinese churches also, because their Chinese is not good enough.” (M2)

但我们的board里面，我们的committee里面，其实是来自不同的背景的。比如我开会我要说普通话，因为有人不会说广东话，那我的普通话，可能说着说着就说到一些广东口音出来，因为你一直说一直说，你就忘记了你自己的那些。那对方怎么听，我说的那个字，进到他们的耳朵里，他们是不是这样理解呢？（我都不清楚）

“In our board, our committees are with a range of various backgrounds. For example, when I have a meeting (with them), I need to speak Mandarin because someone could not speak Cantonese. But my Mandarin, perhaps some Cantonese accent would jump out when I talk, because you may not realize it or forget it when you keep talking. Then how does other people understand you? Do they understand me the same as what I want to present? ( I don't know)” (M1)

那是肯定有的。因为（当时）我们听广东话还不会像现在一样听得多一点。那个时候他们会讲国语的他们都尽量跟我们讲国语，不大会讲的有一些姐妹呢也学着跟我们讲，我们也很感动。他们自己笑了。我说不笑话，我如果讲广东话，我都没有你们讲（讲普通话）得好。所以这个沟通要讲得很深是比较难。他们读经的时候在小组里边是讲粤语，我是叫他们说慢一点，如果实在听不懂我会问的。当然心里觉得是难懂的，碰到讲国语的牧师就好开心哦。

“(…) because (in the past) we could not understand as much Cantonese as we do now. At that time, those (people from Hong Kong) who had learned Mandarin would try

their best to talk with us in Mandarin (...). We were quite moved by that. (...) They spoke Cantonese in the fellowship at that time, I asked them to speak slower, and I would ask them if I wouldn't understand.” (W2)

好像阿梅（化名）是说国语的，那现在教会也有分国语和广东话。 - 当初是主要说广东话吗？ - 现在也有啊。阿梅是说国语比较多的，她的广东话也是一般般，但是我们还是能够听得明白，那我们说得国语也是很一般，但是他们也听得懂。我们这个团契还有一个人，她也是说国语的，她也说，你可以说广东话，我可以明白，不明白我就问吧。国语最差其实是我，我也说，好吧，你们可以说国语，如果我不明白我也问。就是大家愿意去谦卑，去迁就对方，让对方明白，如果真的不明白要去问。所以不同语言也可以是一个团契。

“For example, at that time, Mei used Mandarin more, her Cantonese was just so so, but we could get what she meant generally. Our Mandarin was just moderate, and she could understand us as well.(...) She said, you could use Cantonese, (...) and I said you could use Mandarin and I would ask if I don't understand you. The point is, everyone (should be) humble and willing to accommodate, therefore, we can be in a same fellowship though we speak different languages.” (W6)

大致上如果是分享信息那个困难不是很大。但是如果说到当地的一些事情，譬如香港啊有香港的文化，香港人说开的笑话啊，或者他们爱吃的东西啊，那些形容词啊，这些就会令到人们感到不明白。

就是一些新的字眼或者是形容大家不认识罢了。基本上是Ok的。

“Generally speaking, it is not very hard to share information. But if you talk about some local news, for example, Hong Kong has its own Hong Kong culture, their jokes, or their favorite food, some adjective words they used would confuse me. Like in China (except Cantonese spoken areas), they have some special words used there, (...) I have never heard about it, so I don't know. It makes some difficulties. But these are not some big problems, just some words, some adjective words that we may not know. It is OK basically.” (W1)

这个很普遍，因为大家说的话题一样，加上大家思考的思维也差不多，比较容易聊得来，就容易抱团。起码语言方面已经不需要考虑了。

“I think it happens everywhere not just in the church. It is common, because we talk about similar topics, think in a similar way, and it is easy to chat. So it is easy to bound together, at least, language won't be a barrier.” (W1)

他们说广东话的人可能有一个团契，他们的年龄、背景、语言都相同，他们当时来这里的背景都比较相似，所以可能他们交流起来就比较容易吧。像咱们学生可能就跟学生交流得比较容易。在这里长大的小孩，受这里的文化影响，他们可能交流起来又比较容易。就不是太愿意和我们这些从大陆来的人交流，不见得说不能理解，但是他们就会觉得有一种恐惧感，就不愿意说，只愿意和自己熟悉的人了解的人说。我是这样的想法，我不知道别人会怎么想。

“They Cantonese speakers may have some fellowship groups, they are close in age, background and language, and the background when they came to Sweden is similar, so perhaps they are easy to communicate with each other. We students may find it easier to talk to students (from China Mainland and can speak Mandarin). The kids grown up here are more influenced by the Swedish culture, they may talk to them easier. So they are not that willing to talk to us Chinese from Mainland. I don't think we can't understand them, but they just have a feeling of fear, not that willing to share, and only share (personal stuff) with someone they are familiar with. This is just my opinion.” (W9)

“Joyce, she is a couple of years older than me, so she know how to speak Chinese (Mandarin) and Cantonese, so she naturally finds it easier to communicate with students, but I feel I am a bit like, I don't take the initiative enough.” (W7)

我其实跟说粤语的，年长的人并没有这么交流过，仅限于打招呼，并没有坐下聊过天。- 你觉得是什么原因造成这种情况呢？- 答：可能我每次做完礼拜就到了那桌年轻人那边。不知道说是因为我害羞呢还是没有想说跟每个人都认识。其实并没有这样的一个rule说年轻的坐一堆年长的坐一堆，- 但是大家好像都会怎么坐。

In fact, I seldom talk to the older Cantonese speakers, we just say hi, but I have never sit and chat with them. Every time after the Sunday Service, I will just sit at the table with other young people (international students). (...) Actually there is no rule saying who sit where, but it is likely everyone will just sit like that.” (W4)

“(...) when she introduces the students to me, then I kind of start talking to them. But because people in my age, we all have kind of difficulties with Chinese and Cantonese, we are not fluent, so it takes a while for us to reach out that of comfort zone. I think people in my age, at least, think the same.” (W7)

那有一次呢有一个大学生，正在读硕士的，那ta坐下敬拜完之后呢，很孤单地坐在那里。我就走过去我和ta聊天。他就说，我都不知道大家在说什么？那个气氛不同。那我说，如果你不来，你怕了这个环境，那（就）越来越没有说不同话的人在这里了。

“One day, a university student who studies master program came. After the Sunday Service, he/she sits there seeming lonely. I came to him/her and talked. He/she told me, he/she did not know what other people were talking about. The atmosphere was different. Then I said, if you don't come, you are afraid of it, then there would be less and less people talking different languages here.” (M2)

华人教会毕竟是母语，所以会在讲道啊还有分享上肯定是你的母语会让你理解得更多，感受得更深入，分享得更深入。所以我还是很愿意去华人教会的。

“After all, we use our mother language in the Chinese church, so regarding to sermon

and (religious information) sharing, using your mother language helps you better understand the knowledge, have a deeper feelings, and share deeper.” (W8)

#### Education Level

我就着我们教会的草根阶层比较多，就是那些做餐厅啊，那些比较多。所以留学生来到的时候呢，他们会觉得我讲的很肤浅，比如我用的语句啊，（因为）你说得太学术呢，那些人（草根）都不明白你说什么。于是乎那些学生，就觉得很简单，或者是很没有深度。

另外就是，我举的例子都是比较实用一些的，我们不是探讨一些事情的根源嘛，那这可能满足不了学术水平高的同学，那这个是一个限制。你讲的太深，那些大叔大婶就不知道你在讲什么。

“There are quite a few grassroots in our church, those who works at restaurants. So when international students came, they felt what I said were too shallow, for example, the words I chose. But if you talk too academically, the rest (the grassroots) don't understand. (...) Another thing is, I usually mention about some practical instances which can be applied in your daily lives. We are not attempting to discuss and explore the origins of world, and this may not meet the needs of some students with higher academic achievements. This is a limitation.” (M2)

例如这样子说吧，在这里（查尔姆斯查经班）和在那里（妇女组）带查经，我会觉得有一个挑战是，分分钟我在这边讲一篇对话已经讲完了，又或者说他们（妇女组）的表达能力，思考方式未必这么强，很多时候需要我去说，而不是大家讨论，成为一个查经。这个就是一个不同的地方。但是也看到，嗯，不知道，还有就是理解能力，不是说一讲就可以立刻明白，就是那个吸收，理解能力没有这么强，那你就需要多一点的耐性。所以好像我很罗嗦，重复、重复两三次。

“Comparing my work here (Chalmers Chinese students bible study group) and there (a fellowship with those receiving limited school education), a challenge for me is, because they (those with less school education) are not that good at expressing and critical thinking, I need to talk a lot most of time rather than letting everyone discussing together.(...) So I need to be more patient, and it looks like I often repeat and repeat the words.” (W1)

会觉得谈的东西不太感兴趣（和年纪大的香港人或其他地方来的）。他们就谈一些生活上的琐事，我有时候不是特别感兴趣。就像今天都干了什么啊，买了什么菜啊，就很琐碎的一些事。

“I feel I am not that interested in what the older are talking. They just talk about some trivia, (...) like what they did, what vegetables they bought, very trivial.” (W9).

但是她们是很好的，我反而看她们是很好的基督徒，很单纯地信神，默默地在背后去付出。

同样的如果你叫他们站出来在众人面前做些什么。比如像做招待这样，要上台，要收钱，然后在台前那里祈祷，或者，她们甚至乎是不要做的。因为对于她们来说，好像出了一个安全网，或者说太多的人看着她们，关注她们，或者她们会怕啊，或者说做祷告的时候她们怕自己的言语表达不清晰不好，所以她们会抗拒在这方面去服侍。

“I see them as very good Christians, trust in God with a simple and pure mind, and serve quietly.(...) If you ask them to do something in front of public, for example, to be an usher (...) and pray on the stage, they don't want to do this. Because for them, it is like getting out of the comfort zone, or let's put it like this, they are afraid of being paid attention by too many people. They are worried that they are not good at clearly expressing themselves, so they resist doing such kind of things.” (W1)

所以你会见到在教会，我不是说妇女那边，其实她们就是属于读书不是很多，学识不高的这种群体。其实是比较容易被人遗忘的，因为通常那些有学识，或者很会说话的，或者做事能力强的人会被人关注多一点。所以我觉得她们是会被人遗忘。

“You can see that in the church, those who spend little time in school and lack of academic knowledge are relatively easily ignored by others. In most of the cases, those who gain more attention are the ones having knowledge, with communication skills or ability of working. So I think they will easily be ignored.” (W1)

### The influence of fellowship

团契的时候会分享比较深入的东西，感觉好像每个月分享一次频率挺好的，所以私底下其实交往也不是特别多。偶尔见面的话也是会分享生活啦，聊聊最近的状况啦，有什么需要代祷的这样。如果现在有什么事情让我很困惑和苦恼的话，我会首先想到找我恩典团契里的朋友

“When we are in fellowship, we would share something deep, we don't interact that much in private. When we meet we would share our lives, something that need our fellowship members to pray for. If I met something that bother and upset me a lot, I would first think of turning to the friends of my fellowship”

会在团契里分享一些生活上遇到的挑战啊、试探啊、困难啊，可能跟一些人不愿意分享的会更源于跟那个团契分享。因为团契比较小，大家比较了解，也比较信任。

“Sometimes when we meet some challenges and trials in life, something that we might be unwilling to tell some people, we would be willing to share within the fellowship. Because the fellowship is small and we know and trust each other very well. If we know each other well, we can talk about some private topics”. (W9)

“I don't feel very close to the other members in my fellowship. (...) We are a lot

of people in our fellowship, totally maybe 15 or something, but not everyone comes, so it is a bit hard to (share).” (W7)

## The Influence of Religion

那所以我想这个教会这个缩影可能也都会代表表现的华人的一个社团。但是肯定的一件事是说，那些社团越来越分歧，越来越按照他们原本的habbits, (原来的) 那种文化做事，(我们) 教会却偏要反过来。虽然我们是这么(不同)，但是如果你喜欢做饺子(我不会)，那我就学一下，虽然我从小都没有怎么吃饺子。就有一种反过来，相反的效果。

“Our church can be a miniature of Chinese communities, but one thing for sure, those communities could have more and more conflicts, since they are more likely to stick to their previous habits and their own cultures as time flies. On the contrary, our church tries to find a different way. In spite of the differences, if you like to make dumplings, for instance, and I don't know how to do that, then I would like to learn, though I seldom eat dumplings when I was young. So this is an effect, (we do it) in the other way.” (M1)

在团契呢我有时候也遇到问题的，有时候有的人说话也很伤自己的心的，很伤心，有时候会不想参加这个团契了，这些人真是的。但是有时候来听道，听着听着就觉得，还是饶恕吧，谁没有过错呢？

文化(差异)是有的，但是我们因着神的爱我们可以走到一起。

“I sometimes have problems in the fellowship group as well. Some people just said some hurtful words. I felt quite sad about that and even wanted to quit. But when I keep on listening to the sermon, I know that I need to forgive. Who has never made any mistake? (...) Diversity exists, but thanks to God's love, we come together.” (W6)

因为我来中国教会的同时，我也参加这儿的一个瑞典教会。

到瑞典文教会去做礼拜我也会有那一种投入，会有一种感动。那我所以说不光是人和人的关系，也许人和人的关系还是其次，主要你跟神之间建立的关系，就会有那一种很亲密的感觉。

“When I came to this Chinese church, I also participated in a Swedish Christian church. (...) When I did the worship in that Swedish church, I put my heart on it as well and felt that kind of inspiration. (...) as long as you build a relationship with God, you could feel that kind of closeness.” (W2)

首先，其实教会是神的家嘛。我们基督徒每个星期做礼拜，就好像回到神的家里。然后在那里的人是在神里面的兄弟姐妹，所以是像我的家庭。我是这样的感觉。

“Yes, very much. First of all, church is the home of God. We Christians go to church

every week, and it is like going back to God's home. People there are sisters and brothers in God's Kingdom, and that's my family. That's how I felt. (...) It is not because we are Chinese. If I go to another church (not Chinese church) seriously, I would have felt the sense of belonging as well. But surely I am happy to be with Chinese.” (W3)

但是如果你在坊间看到的，广州人还是喜欢和广州人在一起。比如我们有一些没有去教会的，在Skavanger的一帮广州人，他们自然就会找到一帮广州人。但是他们（其中）去教会的那些呢，ta就可以和我们混得很好。挪威教会会有一个司机是广州人来的，在Skavanger已经三十年了。他在教会以外的地方一般跟广州人埋堆，但是在教会呢他跟很多人都有交流的，他不会说特别和广州人走在一起（教会也有广州人，深圳人）。那这个也是随着年日，在教会的年日而改善。这个就是信仰令到我们去改变。

“(…) there are a bunch of people from Guangzhou (a city in China) in Stavanger, they would bound with Guangzhou people naturally. But some of them who go to the church, they can be mixed with us very well (not Guangzhou people). (...) we have a bus driver from Guangzhou, he has a strong bond with others from Guangzhou, but in church, he has interactions with many people that are not from Guangzhou.”(M2)

那如果ta信主的日子短，这些通常就只是和牧师聊，那ta一般都会嘱咐一句，牧师，你不要（把事情）说出去。所以有时候我们的祈祷会，有一些不方便提名的，你就在心里边挂念祈祷。这个也是我们遇到的，这个是事实，不是容易说出来的。这个是随着ta信仰的深度，令到他愿意公开（私事），给人纪念。

“If he or she just becomes a Christian, they will only share their personal problems with pastor, and tells the pastor not to mention it to someone else. (...) This is what I come across, it is a fact, not easy (for them) to speak out. But as they are growing up in faith, they become more willing to share (their personal) to allow others to pray for them.”(M2)